



SOVIET LITERATURE

Monthly

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IN HONOUR OF THE PEOPLE'S INTELLIGENTSIA

A Kremlin Reception

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A KREMLIN RECEPTION

The Central Committee of the Communist Party and Soviet government gave a reception on February 8, for representatives of the Soviet intelligentsia which is so closely associated with the people and which, together with it, in peaceful creative labour, is shaping new history and contributing to the progress and prosperity of the socialist Soviet Union. Gathered in the Georgievsky Hall of the Kremlin Palace were scientists, engineers, constructors, writers, musicians, composers, artists, and workers in the theatre and cinema arts. They were welcomed by Party and government leaders—A. B. Aristov, N. I. Belyaev, L. I. Brezhnev, N. A. Bulganin, K. Y. Voroshilov, N. G. Ignatov, A. I. Kirichenko, F. R. Kozlov,

A. I. Mikoyan, N. A. Mukhiddinov, M. A. Suslov, E. A. Furtseva, N. S. Khrushchov, P. N. Pospelev, D. S. Korotchenko, Y. E. Kalnberzin, A. P. Kirilenko, A. N. Kosygin, V. P. Mzhavanadze, and M. G. Perukhin.

In an address of welcome, M. A. Suslov, Secretary of the Party Central Committee, said that the CC of the CPSU and U.S.S.R. Council of Ministers had arranged this reception in honour of Soviet intellectuals who, together with the entire people, were doing so much to advance the cause of socialist culture and the great work of building communism. He then introduced N. S. Khrushchov, who was greeted with loud applause.

SPEECH OF NIKITA SERGEYEVICH KHRUSHCHOV

Dear Comrades, allow me, on behalf of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and Soviet government, and on their instructions, to extend warm greetings to our splendid scientists, writers, artists, composers, and workers in higher education, the theatre and the cinema. I want to convey to you, friends, and through you to all intellectuals, our best wishes for continued success in your efforts to promote the well-being of our Motherland and the happiness of our great Soviet people.

Last spring we met with representatives of the arts, and it was then suggested that these meetings should be more frequent. And today, again gathered in the Kremlin, is a large group of the Soviet Union's progressive intelligentsia.

It is representative of Soviet scientific and technical talent, of the men and women whose achievements and discoveries have added to the lustre of our socialist country.

Last year we launched the first artificial Earth satellites. They were built by our scientists, technicians, and workers, who thus raised aloft the banner of Soviet science. To them must go our sincere gratitude for this signal achievement, this immortal exploit in the field of science.

The Soviet Earth satellites have convincingly demonstrated the high level of our science and technology, the high standard of our culture and education. They have dispelled, once and for all, the evil legend of Soviet scientific and technical backwardness. For who will believe that hostile allegation, now that every person in practically every country of the globe can see the Soviet wonder stars.

Epitomized in this achievement of our people, their scientists, engineers, technicians, and workers, is the superiority of the socialist system. For only that system, which emancipated the millions, has enabled them to apply their creative abilities and has provided the conditions necessary for their mastery of science, art, and all the treasure store of human culture.

Everyone can now see that Soviet socialist society opens up limitless vistas and furnishes unbounded opportunities for the development, in every branch of research, culture, and art, of the talent latent in the people. This has effectively refuted all the slander about socialism hampering creative endeavour.

For the immense virility of socialism, the advantages offered by our system of education and scientific organization, the intrinsic vitality of our multinational socialist culture, have all been brought out in the conditions created by Soviet society. Our record of achievement is impressive, and it will become more impressive still as time goes on.

And time, comrades, passes quickly. It is only nine months since we met in May, but just think of all the important events that have occurred, both in this country and internationally.

With their friends in all lands, the Soviet people celebrated the fortieth anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution. It was an occasion for rejoicing and for assessing the triumph of the great ideas of our age, the ideas of socialism and communism.

Representatives of fraternal Communist and Workers' Parties met in Moscow. Their conferences have been of exceptional importance for peace, democracy, and socialism. For we know that the enemies of socialism were loud in proclaiming a "crisis"—indeed, disintegration—of the socialist camp. They spoke of a "crisis" of the international communist movement. The Moscow conferences proved the very opposite: that the unity of the socialist countries had grown immeasurably, that the world communist movement is united by the ideas of Marxism-Leninism. And no force on earth can prevent the continued development of this invincible movement of our age.

The appeal for peace among nations sounded from Moscow reverberated throughout the world. Representatives of 64 Communist and Workers' Parties signed the famous

Peace Manifesto. The popular movement for peace is growing in strength and scope.

The Communist Party and Soviet government have persevered in their firm Leninist policy of peace, foiling the imperialist plans to aggravate the international situation. And we can say with a feeling of satisfaction that our international position today is good, stable. The prestige of the Soviet Union, the world's first land of victorious socialism, has never been higher. A devastating blow has been dealt the imperialist "positions of strength" policy. This is very important for consolidating peace and the positions of socialism.

Success in our foreign policy of peace stems from success at home.

The country can be proud of the splendid achievements of our heroic working class and collective farmers. The big 1957 production and construction programme has been overfulfilled by a considerable margin. More than 3,000 new industrial units, including such giants as the Kuibyshev hydropower plant, were commissioned in the last four years.

The new system of industrial management, through Regional Economic Councils, has given fuller play to local initiative and is already producing good results.

We are witnessing a steep rise in our socialist agriculture which has been making steady progress from year to year.

The Party and government have drawn up a comprehensive plan of economic development over the next fifteen years. Its fulfilment will be a decisive step in the gradual transition to communism.

Our progress and the momentous tasks that lie ahead are very clearly discussed, I think, in the Election Address of the CPSU Central Committee.

When you look back at the record of these last years, you cannot help feeling proud of our socialist system, created by the Soviet people under the leadership of the Communist Party. It has brought many benefits, and will bring many more within the near future.

Comrades, our Soviet intellectuals have been working hand in hand with the people in building communist society. Our physicists, mathematicians, chemists, and other members of the technical professions, and our physicians, school-teachers, economists, agronomists, zootechnicians, and workers in every other field—they are all making their distinctive contribution to the great work of building communism. A special place in all our work is held by Marxism-Leninism, the revolutionary science that illuminates our path to victory.

Though our achievements are great, we must never allow ourselves to rest content. Our further gains in peaceful competition between socialism and capitalism, and the tempo of our advance to communism, depend in no small measure upon you, scientists and technicians, upon every intellectual.

When we speak of Soviet science and the headway it has made, we should never overlook the importance of our secondary schools and higher education establishments which train the personnel for every branch of national life. Every scientist, writer,

and artist present here today owes much to the professors and instructors under whom he studied. And I would like to thank them for their indefatigable and noble work in training our men of science, letters, and arts.

Soviet writers, artists, composers, theatre and cinema workers have given our people new, significant works. They participate actively in the nation-wide effort for the triumph of the great ideals of communism. They help to train the new men and women of communist society and enjoy universal esteem and affection. The Party has always been concerned for the development of our literature and art.

Our creative artists, as events have shown, have displayed a high degree of ideological maturity and a correct understanding of the complex problems involved in the Party's struggle to eliminate the consequences of the personality cult. True, in the case of individual writers there was some vacillation. We had frank talks at the last reception and advised these comrades to discard their false conceptions, take a critical view of revisionist allegations and delve deeper into the problems of life, so as to gain a better understanding of Soviet reality and the laws that govern it. For life, in its uninterrupted development, is the best school, the best confirmation of the profound correctness of the Communist Party's policy.

It is gratifying to note that our writers have correctly understood the purpose of our discussions, actively shared in the Party's battle against all manifestations of revisionism and have rallied still more closely around the Party. The splendid unity of our intellectuals with the Party and the people has been further strengthened, and this has made for new achievements in Soviet literature and the arts.

I have already said that the past year has been one of continued progress in literature and in all the arts. No small number of good books have been published. I shall not enumerate them, for if I mention Mikhail Stelmakh's novel and fail to mention Vadim Kozhevnikov's, Kozhevnikov might take offence. If I mention Galina Nikolayeva's novel and fail to mention the new book by Petrus Brovka—he will be offended, too. Many will then wonder: why am I not included in the list? The answer is: the list of good books is too long to be read out here.

It is, however, important to single out the chief thing, namely, that our writers have proved, by their work, their undivided fidelity to the great truth of Soviet life.

I liked Sholokhov's *A Man's Lot*, a story of the strength of Soviet character, which no ordeals can break. I liked the chapters from Tvardovsky's new poem published in *Pravda*, the story of the big construction projects on the Angara and Padun. Tvardovsky has recaptured all the authentic flavour of these huge power projects, the spirit of the men building them. He has brought to his poetry their thoughts and hopes, and the enthusiasm that animates them. I liked, too, the articles of Nikolai Gribachov. But again, once you begin to name the books you like, you are liable to miss one worthy of mention and the author might take offence. You will permit me, I hope, not to give a list.

I visited the U.S.S.R. Art Exhibition recently. It was a great pleasure. There are many excellent canvases, notably those devoted to Lenin and the Communist

Party. Our artists are turning more and more to the depiction of the ordinary Soviet citizen, of his life, labour, and thoughts.

The next exhibition will be held in 1960, and we hope it will give an even deeper, more panoramic and salient picture of our people, the builders of communism.

In the theatre, there have been many good plays on contemporary Soviet themes. That our theatres have worked hard and fruitfully was evident from the festival arranged for the fortieth anniversary. In Moscow there have been good plays not only by local theatres, but by companies from Leningrad, Kiev, Minsk, Vilnyus, Odessa, Saratov, Kazan, Yakutsk, and other cities of the Soviet Union.

Much has been accomplished also in the cinema. About one hundred feature films were released in the past twelve months. It has to be said, however, that not all of them are of an equally high standard; some are mediocre, even poor. But on the whole, the cinema people are doing a good job. They have given the public a number of good films showing the path traversed by Soviet society and Soviet life as it is today. And you know, of course, that the public received these films well, both dramas devoted to our heroic past, and pictures of a lighter vein.

Much that is of value and interest has come from our composers. One can sense a multiformity of talent and a vast scope of artistic quests. It is good to know that our music is developing on a wholesome, national foundation, that our composers are making good headway, producing works which the people understand and appreciate.

Artistic development, of course, has not been even. There has been significant advance in some fields, and a lag in others. But on the whole, there has been a general forward movement in every field, and that is gratifying.

Continued economic progress, and the steady rise of living standards from year to year, will make for a greater quantitative and qualitative demand for books, films, works of music and art, plays, and so on.

What should one wish our writers, theatre and cinema producers, composers and artists? More boldness in their creative ventures, more attention to life, to the people around them, and more emphasis on the present.

There is a tendency to concentrate on the past: this is especially noticeable in the repertoire of some of our theatres. But the artist who tries to escape from the present, from the significant themes it offers, inevitably seals himself off from life, and from meaningful art.

Our enemies do not like the optimistic, life-affirming accent in Soviet art. They would like to see our writers, artists and composers, everyone, in fact, working in this field, interpreting life in sceptical terms, painting as bleak a picture of it as possible. But we shall not yield an inch of ground to our ideological opponents. We never for a moment doubt that the talent and creative acumen of our writers and artists will make for new, valuable and interesting productions.

Special mention, I think, should be made of the younger generation. It is pleasant to know that the veterans in science and arts have now been joined by a large group of young scientists and engineers, that there has been no small number of good

books by young writers, that our younger composers, artists, producers, and stage and screen actors have won wide popularity.

They deserve more attention, for these are the men and women who will take over from the older generation and carry forward the banner of Soviet science, literature, and art. And we must see to it that this young generation makes a more substantial contribution to Soviet science and culture.

The great Lenin taught us to show the utmost solicitude for talent. Every new achievement of our scientists, writers, artists, composers, every new achievement in the theatre and cinema, should be an occasion for rejoicing, and we must not hesitate to give credit where credit is due.

Comrades, magnificent vistas open to our country and people. Just think of the limitless opportunities open to everyone of you, the vast opportunities for inspired labour, for applying your talent and creative imagination.

And it is good, comrades, to live and work in a country whose development is based on the most progressive of all sciences, Marxism-Leninism, a country which, in this great era, marches in the van of social progress.

My toast is to our Soviet intellectuals, an integral part of the people, to you who are making such a big contribution to the great work of building communism! Your health! I wish you every success, my friends!

These words were greeted with prolonged and loud applause. When it subsided, N. S. Khrushchov spoke of the role of scientists and university professors.

Comrades, I wish to say a few words about our Soviet scientists and the teaching staff of our universities and colleges. The people have a high regard for your noble work, and they are proud of your impressive achievements.

These achievements are one of the most striking examples of the flourishing state of our Soviet socialist society. Socialism emancipates man and presents boundless opportunities for developing every facet of his personality, for the most daring exploits in research. Under socialism science becomes an immense constructive force, one that serves man, the people and their happiness.

Soviet scientists have given our country great discoveries. We built the world's first atomic power plant, and the world's biggest micro-particle accelerator. Working in fellowship with our engineers, technicians, and workers, our scientists built the first artificial Earth satellite. They were the first to break through to outer space. The Russian word *Sputnik* has now been adopted by every language. And all this we owe to the inventive genius of our older savants, and to the younger men trained in our universities and colleges.

Soviet science and our higher education system must always be in the van in every field. That is a matter of honour for every Soviet scientist.

My toast is to those who are carrying science and technology forward, thereby bringing us nearer to our communist tomorrow. To the scientists and technicians, true sons of the Soviet people and glorious patriots of our socialist Motherland! To our professors and instructors, who have dedicated themselves to the training of the youth!

To progressive Soviet science!

Academician I. V. Kurchatov, the eminent physicist, expressed the warm gratitude scientists feel for the Communist Party and Soviet government.

Russian men of science, he said, have always, at every stage of history, selflessly served the people. They regarded research, which before the Revolution often entailed sacrifice and hardship, as their voluntary duty, their mission, the very essence of their life and happiness. And that great Russian tradition of serving the people has been carried forward by Soviet scientists. But ours, he said, is an immeasurably more fortunate lot than theirs.

For we Soviet scientists are an integral part of our victorious people. And it is only thanks to the people and its heroic labour effort that we have been able to accomplish what Nikita Sergeyevich has described here. It is only thanks to the people and their heroic labour effort that we were able to solve such complex scientific and technological problems as the production of industrial atomic energy, the design of new types of aircraft, intercontinental ballistic missiles and artificial Earth satellites. This community of effort is the earnest of our success, of our further progress in science, and of the immense, unprecedented, I would say, potentialities it offers. There is no problem today which Soviet science is not capable of solving.

From the bottom of our hearts we thank the glorious Communist Party and its Central Committee, our government and the whole Soviet people, for the affection and trust they have shown us. To our Party and government! To our great and noble people! (*Loud applause*).

N. S. Khrushchov then addressed the following words to writers.

Comrades, by building communism, the Soviet people are translating into reality the finest and noblest dreams of mankind. But the building of communism is a struggle, and struggle requires men and women of strong spirit, firmly convinced in the justice of our great cause, men and women of sterling moral quality. The books of our Soviet authors help to foster these traits. They encourage all the finest, sincere and progressive elements in our life and teach people to abhor and combat evil, malice, brutality. They help the Party in the great work of communist education.

We have had many discussions with writers, friendly talks about problems and trends in our literature. And there were critical remarks about writers whose work revealed mistaken views.

This comradely criticism of shortcomings and wrong trends which led the artist away from the only correct path of helping the people build communism, was animated by concern for the future of Soviet literature.

Books have appeared of late which reveal a welcome clarity of ideological understanding, a desire to portray the great efforts and successes of our people with insight and inspiration, and bring out all the grandeur of the heroic path the country has traversed in the building of communist society.

I wish you continued success, my friends!

To Soviet literature, to our Soviet writers!

Tumultuous applause resounded through the vast hall. When it subsided, **Nikolai Tikhonov**, one of the country's oldest writers, replied, saying that Soviet authors were proud of their mission, of the fact that throughout these forty years they have propagated the ideas of our great Party, the great principles of Marxism-Leninism, the philosophy of the new world, and have faithfully served progressive mankind.

Soviet literature has always been a weapon of the Party, and of this Soviet writers are proud. Soviet literature has always been a helper of the Party, and of this, too, Soviet writers are proud. And it shall always be so, for ours is a literature of progressive humanity. From the very first days of the October Revolution, we Soviet writers have been at one with the Communist Party and the great cause it symbolizes.

My toast is to our great teacher, our best friend and source of inspiration—the Communist Party which is leading mankind onward, its Central Committee, headed by the Presidium. (*Loud applause.*)

The next speaker was **N. A. Bulganin**.

I would like to convey our best wishes to workers in the Soviet cinema. The great Lenin regarded the cinema as the most universal art and valuable medium of educating the masses.

Nikita Sergeyevich has already remarked that our cinema workers have produced truthful and meaningful pictures imbued with the ideas of communism. The past year has seen further progress in our multinational cinema art. We can point to a number of important films on topical and historical themes. This is a heartening development, but we should not lose sight of the fact that not all the films have been equally good. Our cinema workers must strive for perfection, always mindful of the rising requirements of the Soviet public. It wants films of a high standard, which truthfully and vividly portray the life of our workers, peasants, and intellectuals, and help the Party educate the masses in the spirit of communism.

N. A. Bulganin wished Soviet cinema workers continued success in their fruitful labours for the benefit of the Soviet people. (*Loud applause.*)

Cinema producer G. V. Alexandrov, who replied to the toast, said the whole world could now see that the Soviet people had attained unsurpassed levels in all spheres of endeavour. But the world wants to know more about the Soviet people, about the men and women who performed the Great October Revolution, surmounted incredible difficulties, and were the first to conquer outer space. It is to the Soviet citizen, Alexandrov said, that our art should turn for its themes. We thank the Central Committee of the Party, our government and Comrade Bulganin, who has said such encouraging things. But we are fully aware that we have not made use of all available opportunities. This year we would like to see films produced about our everyday life, films that provide an insight into the future. More films on topical subjects! We want to thank the Party Central Committee for the organization of the Cinema Artists' Union. But let me add that, like all other such unions, it can only be effective if it is a faithful and active assistant of the Party.

We feel sure that, in alliance with the younger men, we will solve the problem before us—the problem of launching a cinema Sputnik!

My toast is to the good fortune of being with the Communist Party, with the people, the good fortune of marching in step with our socialist century. (*Applause.*)

P. N. Pospelov, Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, spoke of Soviet music.

Our composers and musicians, he said, have already done much for the people. Our excellent Soviet songs—songs of profound content and our symphony music are known and appreciated far beyond the U.S.S.R. They bring to the world a message of peace and friendship from our people. The whole world knows the famous *Song of the Motherland* and the *World Democratic Youth March*, and many more written by Soviet composers.

The jubilee year 1957 has been a fruitful one, in the symphonic field as well as in the opera and light opera. It is good to know that many of these new works have a definite social significance and bring to our audiences the noble and heroic ideas of the proletarian revolution. Our musicians made a splendid showing at international contests. Soviet musical culture is rich and flourishing, and the future holds out even greater promise. The people expect of their composers new songs expressive of the heroism of our time, songs rich in emotional impact, national in character, and understandable to all.

P. N. Pospelov concluded by wishing composers and musicians good health, happiness and continued success for the benefit of the Soviet people. His speech was loudly applauded.

Dmitri Shostakovich, who replied, remarked that the history of music provides no parallel for the excellent conditions afforded by the Soviet Union for the flourishing of talent and craftsmanship.

Soviet composers have written some excellent music. Indeed, 1957, the jubilee year, produced a "bumper crop" of songs worthy of the great anniversary.

I shall not speak here of the excellent conditions created by the Communist Party and Soviet government, of the material solicitude they have shown for us composers. But I wish to emphasize the day-to-day, attentive and thoughtful—paternal, I would say—leadership our musical art enjoys.

My toast is to the Communist Party and its Central Committee, the Soviet government, and the great Soviet people! (*Applause.*)

A. I. Mikoyan, spoke of the multinational Soviet theatre.

We can say without exaggeration that our theatrical people worked hard and fruitfully in 1957. The plays staged for the fortieth anniversary are conclusive evidence of the vast potentialities latent in socialist realism. They are expressive of the great ideas of our time, though they vary widely in form, we know that all our theatre workers are eager to contribute to the united effort of the people in the building of communism and help the Party and country achieve that goal.

This requires, above all, that all the wealth of our theatre be used to affirm the new and progressive, and relentlessly expose the old and backward.

A. I. Mikoyan wished the theatre continued success. The strength of our intelligentsia and people, he said, lies in their common participation in the building of communism. With all the national multiformity, and all the differences in national character, the peoples of the U.S.S.R. are firmly united under the banner of communism in building the new life. And that is the main thing.

My toast is to our theatrical workers, I wish them good health and success, and the continued flourishing of our multinational theatre! (*Loud applause.*)

People's Artist M. I. Tsaryov thanked the Party Central Committee for the high appraisal which Comrade Mikoyan had given the Soviet theatre.

We consider ourselves faithful helpers of the Party in the communist training of the people, Tsaryov said, in the training of the youth. Art must always be regarded from the ideological, partisan, people's viewpoint. Unfortunately, that is sometimes forgotten, and we are prone to be less exacting to each other, to take offence at friendly, comradely criticism. That can only impair our work. We consider it a sacred duty to stage plays which reflect the rich spiritual life of the Soviet citizen. To serve the people and to deserve their praise—what better reward can any Soviet citizen, any Soviet artist wish for?

Speaking for the theatrical profession, Tsaryov assured the Soviet government and Party Central Committee that theatrical workers would dedicate their hearts and minds to the furtherance of Soviet art, the most humane and progressive in the world.

M. A. Suslov, Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, spoke of the role of Soviet painters and sculptors, many of whom were present at the reception.

We are happy to welcome representatives of Soviet art, he said. Our people know and esteem their painters, sculptors, and graphic artists. Life has proved that our art, so intimately associated with the people and the Party, is growing and developing with every passing day. Clear evidence of this is the U.S.S.R. Art Exhibition, unparalleled for scope and variety.

It provides striking demonstration of the various forms and the development of socialist culture in all the fraternal republics and enjoys immense popularity. In the two or three months since its opening, over a million people have been to see it. In what capitalist country will you find such interest and love of art? But there are big problems to be solved. We are confident that Soviet artists will create even more significant canvases, even more exciting works dedicated to the life and heroic labour of the builders of communist society.

To our beautiful art of socialist realism. To our big and splendid collective of artists. Your health, comrades!

These words were greeted with loud applause.

People's Artist K. F. Yuon replied, warmly thanking the Presidium of the Party Central Committee for its unflagging concern for Soviet art. The jubilee exhibition would never have been as fine as was described here, were it not for the attention and solicitude constantly displayed by the Central Committee Presidium.

To our Soviet art, comrades, to its ideological purity. Permit me to express the confidence that our artists will unite still closer. May Soviet art develop along the same path and towards the same goal as our beloved Leninist Party. To the Party and its Central Committee!

A brief speech was then made by K. Y. Voroshilov.

Gathered here, he said, are representatives of many professions, many branches of science, technology, and art. Many complementary things have been said about them, and we have drunk their health. My toast is to good health of the people who have dedicated their lives and talents to safeguarding the health of the Soviet citizen. To our medical science and its exponents, to our doctors, old and young, and especially to the health of our people, the creators of the new life! May their health be more effectively safeguarded against all contingencies, against all the unpleasant

things that might affect our most gifted and needed people. We have done much in medicine. The last war showed that no country can vie with us in this respect.

In the old days it was practically a rule for one person in three to contract smallpox. And just think of how many died! Nothing of that kind can happen today. But we should like to see our medical science reach higher standards still.

The hall responded with loud applause.

Academician K. I. Skryabin replied:

As a biologist and physician, I want to say that our mission is to preserve life, and for that reason we say: Long live peace, for life and peace are synonymous; where there is peace, there is life. We biologists and doctors want to see the life span prolonged.

To loud applause of the whole hall Dr. Skryabin called for a toast to the Communist Party and Soviet government.

Writer Sergei Mikhalkov spoke of the Soviet children, our future, and the Communist Party and Soviet government, which have shown unremitting solicitude for the growing generation.

S. P. Korolev, Corresponding Member of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences, said that our era had seen the greatest dream of mankind come true—the emergence of communist society. Soviet scientists, artists, every Soviet citizen, is happy to make his modest contribution to the people's cause, to the realization of communism.

In his concluding remarks, N. S. Khrushchov wished continued success, strength, and good health to all Soviet intellectuals, to workers in all branches of scientific, cultural, and technical endeavour, mentioning by name many of the artists, architects, technicians, philosophers, constructors, doctors, biologists, and representatives of the humanities present at the reception.

The hall responded with loud, prolonged applause and cheers.

The reception was held in an atmosphere of warmth and cordiality symbolic of the close and unbreakable bonds uniting the exponents of progressive Soviet science, technology, and culture with the Communist Party, the organizing and directing force of Soviet society, its Leninist Central Committee and the Soviet government.

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SOVIET LITERATURE

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Mikhail Stepanovich

Let the Blood of Man not Flow...

15

THE sun looked down on the earth from under clouds like shaggy eyebrows and marvelled—why were there so many people out on the fields? They flowed together from every part of the village, for all the world as though it was Easter time and people were flocking to church. Worn boots and bruised legs brushed away dew which gleamed grey and unsparkling, trampled upon early shadows, then halted on the furrows which held their happiness.

Most of the people gathered round Timofi Goritsvit as he walked along in silence with his white, newly-made land measure. He could feel hundreds of eyes bent upon him; some were warm with hope, others stabbed in hatred. Beside him flaxen-headed Yurko Pidoprigora held the lists, for before dawn had broken red-whiskered Taganetz, secretary of the village Soviet and former district clerk, had drunk himself stupid and refused to have anything to do with the lists or even with his allotment.

"If you've a horse you need harness, but I've got my handwriting and I can get along without any of your land." He passed his tongue over thick lips accustomed to lies and unearned food.

A short distance from the pond, just where the Novobugovka land joined that of Lyubar, Timofi came to the boundary of Varchuk's land and paused. He looked for the elderly bearded bee-keeper Marko Sinitsa, smiled at him and glanced at the sun. It had just slipped out from behind narrow rosy clouds, driving the frightened shadows before it with golden arrows until they paled, broke in confusion, fled along the valley and sank into the pond with a play of sparkling ripples.

Timofi could not find the words to convey all that he was feeling. First he wanted to cross himself before the sun, but he thought better of it and turning to the peasants said rather quietly, "Well—shall we start the good work?"

"With God's will, Timofi, with God's will," answered a number of voices and Marko Sinitsa crossed himself three times—he was the first to get his land.

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His wife did the same and then burst into tears, wiping her eyes with the end of her kerchief.

"Hush your noise, silly woman," her husband hissed at her. "What d'ye want to start that for?" And he drove a marker down at one end of his strip.

As the measure turned in Timofi's hands, tracing the first plot, Safron Varchuk, Larion Denisenko, Ivan Sichkar and Yakov Danko hurried to Timofi.

"Stop, Timofi!" gasped Varchuk, panting, his hand against his heart. "Stop—d'you hear me?"

Goritsvit did not vouchsafe him so much as a glance. With calm, even steps he paced the land, immersed in an inner reckoning which included his own joy and that of the others, and the tears shed by Marko Sinitsa's wife.

"Stop, Timofi." Varchuk's dark hand lay upon the white measure. "I've got to talk to you."

"Have a bit of a rest first, Safron, you're all out of breath. Then we'll talk." With quiet assurance Timofi removed the rich man's hand from the measure and went on.

Somebody cursed through his teeth. Larion Denisenko raised his knotted stick but Ivan Bondar tore it from him and flung it aside.

"Hands off, you bastardly son-of-a-bitch!" snarled Larion.

"I just want you to live a bit longer, that's all! Sorry for your stupid brain in a good skull."

"You'll be sorry for yourself yet, when I get after you!" bawled Larion, thrusting his head with its wheel of shaggy hair into Ivan's face.

"Shut your big jaw, Larion!"

"Or you'll find yourself carried home on a hurdle!" somebody shouted from the crowd. Sticks and boundary markers carved with care from the hardest wood were brandished in the air.

Denisenko glared stubbornly about, then his lips, barely visible through the whiskers on his flat face, parted involuntarily. There seemed a good chance that he might indeed be carried home on a hurdle.

The boundary line brought Timofi to the road; he stopped.

"Put down a hundred and two sogenes in length," he said to Yurko, and turning to Varchuk asked, "Well, Safron, haven't you gone off the boil yet?"

Varchuk and the other rich men went close to Goritsvit; only the virgin whiteness of the new land measure blocked the road of their ancient hatred. Behind them Bondar, Kushnir, Sinitsa and Olexandr Pidoprigora watched alertly, while Polikarp Sergienko fell back to the boundary line and stretched out his long neck to make sure of missing nothing.

Safron's dark, dull eyes bored into Timofi as he asked, as calmly and loudly as he could, "By what right, Timofi, are you taking farmers' land?"

"Don't you know that yourself?"

"I'm waiting to hear."

"The Revolution gave that right, that law," answered Timofi, giving Varchuk back look for look. Varchuk lost control of himself.

"You lying blackguard!"

"Blackguard yourself—and blood-sucker!"

"Listen, good people, the Revolution gave quite a different law!" shouted Varchuk. "It gave the right to take estate and government land, but ours is to be left alone!" He snatched a newspaper from an inner pocket, unfolded it and waved it over his head. "Here! Here is the real law, printed!"

"Read it," said Goritsvit with outward calm—although inwardly he was far from happy. What if there was something new in the latest papers, something he had not heard about?

The muzhiks closed in, forming a dark ring round him and Safron, who raised the newspaper respectfully to his very whiskers, thought a moment and then said in a loud voice, "This is the land law passed by the Workers' and Peasants' Government on the 5th of February, 1920."

"Who signed it?" somebody asked.

"The law is signed by the chairman of the All-Ukrainian Revolutionary Committee, Grigori Petrovsky. Is he good enough for you?" Varchuk's voice rose and rang out like that of a cantor in church.

"No need to start singing, you're no nightingale, read it," snarled Stepan Kushnir, looking over Varchuk's shoulder at the paper—for the man was quite capable of twisting everything round.

"Here is the law!"

Varchuk shifted to an easier pose and coughed into his sleeve.

"The Workers' and Peasants' Government of the Ukraine, restored by the blood of the Russian and Ukrainian workers' and peasants' army, entering upon its state duties, considers itself bound to free the peasants of the Ukraine, finally and for ever, from the power of the estate owners, to provide them with land, and with their help to create the conditions for the establishing of the power of labour on the land.

"The Workers' and Peasants' Government proclaims for the universal information of workers and peasants, and of the civil and military authorities of the Ukraine:

"1. From now onwards, the right to use the land on Ukrainian territory is enjoyed only by working people.

"2. All the farms belonging up to this time to working peasants, Cossacks, former state peasants, etc., remain unaffected, and their owners can in the



future, freely and without let or hinderance, use all the land in those forms in which they have enjoyed its use up to now—homestead, farmstead, hamlet land, common land, etc.”

“You have heard the law!” Denisenko bawled. “Nobody has the right to touch our homestead, farmstead or common land! But the estates, do what you like with them.”

Goritsvit suddenly cut him short.

“A smart trick! Must have spent a long time looking for a hole to slip through. Think the law’s like a sieve? Nay, it’s not like that any longer. It’s not for the likes o’ you that law’s written!” Never before had he made such a long speech, but now the words burst out themselves. “Come, good folks, all that’s nothing to do with Varchuk and Denisenko. The law says plainly—farms belonging to *working* people should be let alone.”

“And what d’you call ours?” Varchuk seethed.

“Yours are worked by other folks’ sweat!”

“That’s the way, Timofi! Thought they’d fool us!” cried Bondar in high delight, thinking the while: Good for Goritsvit! Found his tongue at last, and what a tongue!

A terrific hubbub rose on the fields, the kulaks insisting one thing, the poor peasants the other; nobody listened, everybody shouted and threatened. Timofi, however, turned his measure and began pacing off the width of the plot, just as though none of it concerned him in the least. Very soon the kulak group retreated to the road, amid jeering shouts and whistles, and trailed back to the village. Their weeping, scolding wives came hurrying out to meet them. Varchuk frowned and gestured for them to be quiet.

“That’s no use, women. Go back home.”

“I’ll scratch that Goritsvit’s eyes out!” hissed Nastya Denisenko, so pale with rage that everyone felt a vixen like that was capable of anything.

The poor peasants’ wives, however, soon cooled Nastya’s belligerence. With the plain speech of the farms they called her a bitch, and had so many biting remarks to make about her lovers that she fled in confusion—for it had never entered her head that the things she had so carefully concealed from neighbours and particularly from her family were known throughout the village. For the first time her angry eyes held a gleam of fear, and then the shine of tears. With horror she suddenly saw all the shamelessness of her flesh which could no longer be hidden even by the finest clothes, for what was known to a few in the village would soon be known to all. If her husband and son came to hear of it!

More than one scene of joy and shame, happiness and rage passed before Timofi that morning, but all that was bad fell away as mud falls away from the white plumage of a swan, and a vibrant warmth filled him. In his mind he felt the firm grip of horny hands which for a whole lifetime had longed for the land, and he saw the moist eyes, the grateful kisses of those who looked at soil now become their own. Poor men, widows and orphans spoke moving words, wished him good health and softly urged him to drop in in the evening for a glass of something.

"If I drink with all of you my head'll burst," Timofi protested.

"On a day like this it won't, Timofi, it'll only be clearer," they assured him.

So he took from field to field a kind, faintly sad smile half hidden in his eyes and the corners of his mouth, ever and anon glancing round with a tremor in his heart—when would Miroshnichenko come to measure out his, Timofi Goritsvit's, land?

At midday his happy mood was dissipated for a time by Suprun Fesyuk. Since morning he had been in his fields, awaiting Goritsvit and the villagers. He did not storm, he did not threaten, he only stood on the boundary, a figure of stone. And when Goritsvit went past him with the measure Suprun suddenly swayed, collapsed on the boundary and lay there prone, convulsed with sobs. "My land, my land!" he gasped again and again, passing fumbling hands like a blind man's over it, clutching it, tearing up stubble and leaves and thrusting them into his pockets.

Timofi was sorry for the man. He went back, raised him and picked up his hat, shaking his head in reproof.

"Now, don't carry on that way, Suprun, there's folks have borne more than you and worse than you."

"But it's the land, the land," Suprun mumbled again and again, his fingers still convulsively clutching handfuls of black dust.

"It's not worth more than men," Timofi answered. "You've got sense, you ought to understand."

Silently the people streamed past Suprun, leaving him standing alone on the boundary ridge torn and scratched by his own fingers.

If Suprun upset Timofi, Vasili Karpets, a bewhiskered muzhik who understood horses like a Gipsy, brought laughter to all. He had been so impatient for his allotment that he could not wait for sunrise, he and his wife had driven on to Sozonenko's land while it was still dark. Husband and wife had found it pretty cold in the open cart, and when dawn broke Karpets decided there was no sense in wasting time; he guessed at the boundaries of his land and started ploughing. His wife tried to stop him, but he called her a stupid woman and threatened to break the whip-handle over her shoulders. Mokrina, however, knew how much notice to take of that; she picked up the whip, gave her husband a flick with it and then turned her attention to the horses.

Rich fat clods fell back from the ploughshares as they sliced through juicy roots, and Karpets' ginger-whiskered face glowed with bliss. Bent over the handles, he saw only the hind legs of the horses. When the ridges were uneven he crushed the clods with his foot gently, so as not to hurt the soil.

Karpets had no more words of abuse for his wife, he only shouted at her sometimes to drive the horses harder. When they came to the place where Karpets had mentally placed the boundary he was seized with doubts. He paced it out, felt certain he had not given himself enough and took his plough on farther, although his wife tried to dissuade him. When Goritsvit arrived with the other

peasants, however, he said at once that Karpets had ploughed too far. And he was right. Karpets was furious.

"Look how many furrows I've done for that Sozonenko, the foul fiend run away with him. Even here he's got something for naught! I'll sue him—make him pay for the ploughing."

"In that case, why don't you finish the whole of Sozonenko's land, and then take him to court?" suggested Stepan Kushnir innocently, and everyone around burst out laughing. Even Mokrina Karpets shook with laughter, although her husband's lower lip was thrust out with growing anger.

All the time Safron Varchuk and Ivan Sichkar hung about, watching from a distance. These two could trust one another in everything. Despite their fury they agreed that it would be unwise to stain their own hands with murder; that fool Fesyuk would give them away.

"Now's the very time to go to Batko Galchevsky," said Varchuk, despondently watching a sleepy wasp crawling slowly over a white flower.

"I can't go now," answered Sichkar, who in the course of one night had become much more cautious. "I'll go tomorrow."

"What's the difference to you, Ivan, today or tomorrow? And a day means more than a year these times."

"A lot of difference. Tomorrow I go back to prison, no suspicion can fall on me."

"Well, we'll have to wait, then," Varchuk agreed unwillingly, kicking the flower so that the wasp tumbled off on to the stubble. He ground it into the earth with his boot, then watched from the corner of his eye as the insect, injured wings vibrating, tried to wriggle out of the soft earth.

"Isn't that Timofi's brat coming this way?" asked Sichkar, and Varchuk forgot the wasp.

Dmitro was crossing the field with his father's staid, sober walk. Two pots tied together with a cloth swung from his hand—evidently he was bringing dinner out to the fields.

"Can't you see for yourself? He's the very spit of his father."

Sichkar went to meet Dmitro, planting his stout legs firmly on the shoulder of the road.

"Where are you off to? Your father's not going to die of hunger before evening!"

The lad cast a lowering look at the rich man but said nothing; his whole body was taut as a violin string.

"Let's have a look, anyway, see what keeps a pauper's soul and body together." Sichkar bent over the bundle, preparing to snatch it from Dmitro's hand. The boy pulled it away.

"Keep off! Stick your nose in your wife's pots!" Dmitro passed the bundle into his other hand and backed, keeping a wary eye on the other.

"No respect, that's what they're like those days," Sichkar turned to Varchuk. "When I was a boy I'd have had my hair tugged for that—so!" He suddenly reached out a fat hand to Dmitro's head.

"Keep off, I tell you!" Dmitro paled and jerked his head back. But Sichkar grabbed a handful of the boy's wavy hair and pulled hard.

"That's how they taught us to respect our betters—" He broke off with a gasp.

Dmitro, stepping back, had brought the pots down with all his might on Sichkar's head, so that the warm fragments scattered on the ground and a mixture of soup and milk porridge trickled down his cheeks.

"You—! You—!" Varchuk, dumbfounded by the unexpectedness of it all, once more ground the wasp into the soil, this time finally.

16

The old highroad stretched, a grey ribbon with lacy edges, beneath a broken archway of ancient lime-trees. Time had long ago eaten away their hearts and the hollow trunks provided homes for wild bees or mating wood pigeons. Sometimes, too, the rusty-looking head of an owl would peer out of some dusty hole, but Miroshnichenko felt a repugnance for these. He loved the beauty and power of nature. There had been a time when the Podolye woods had bred fewer creatures of unpleasant ways, and the bees had built their honey-combs on the ground because there were not sufficient hollow trees or banks. Why, the old folk said that somewhere close to Medzhibozh the bees had even kept the savage Tatars out of a woodland village. For in their ignorance of the road, the invading horde rode right into swarms of earth-bees, which rose in black clouds and attacked horses and riders.

The motor-cycle hopped and leaped like an angry beast along the highway. Oak woods stretched on either side, ancient trees had even invaded the high shoulder of the road, strewing it with acorns for four versts. A light breeze brought from the grove the scent of wild apples, fading valerian, the spicy aroma of rotting leaves and a damp mushroomy smell.

Miroshnichenko liked oak groves best in autumn. In springtime they were late in coming to life, they stood bare both above and below, because no white snowdrop, no pale primrose, no white, red or blue stavesacre could push its way up through the tough covering of leaves on the ground. Only an unassuming coltsfoot here and there rose from that cemetery of leaves. But in the autumn—then the oak woods were glorious, both in early autumn when their coppery acorns ripened, and later, in their finery of gold and russet.

Sloe berries hung in smoky drops on the shoulder of the road, bringing a reminder of the children who had wanted to go berrying in the forest. How were they getting on? With an involuntary sigh Miroshnichenko's thoughts turned to the village, and a sharp regret pierced him because he would not be there to divide up the land for his fellow-villagers that day. Mingled with all this was an uneasy sense of something he had forgotten, something he had left undone. It was only as they came to the town that he remembered—he had not told Goritsvit to give Mariyka Bondar a little extra land.

Now she'll be cursing every bone in my body, he thought with a smile—he well knew Mariyka's ways, and how Ivan stood them was a puzzle.

Zamriborshch swung his machine round and brought it to a halt in style before the main entrance of the executive committee building, startling two saddled horses that were busy eating the greenish bark of the young trees to which they were tied. Miroshnichenko frowned at the sight of this. A fine place to tie horses! He unfastened them and led them to a weathered fence. But before he had fastened them up again, a messenger was calling him from the entrance.

"Hurry, hurry up, Comrade Miroshnichenko!" he shouted, waving both arms. "They're all on the jump, waiting for you."

"What on earth's up? A fire?" asked Miroshnichenko climbing the steps. "Or has one of those bands started rampaging?"

"Not a band, but Comrade Kulnitsky," the messenger said, lowering his voice. "He's been blowing everyone up."

Miroshnichenko frowned. He had no love for the glossy Kulnitsky and his fine phrases, secretly considering him a dandified gasbag, all show. If this was the one who awaited him, he could expect nothing pleasant.

The room occupied by Ivan Rudenko, vice-chairman of the district executive, was grey with tobacco smoke. The blowing-up process was evidently ended, for everyone was standing, some preparing to return to their own departments, others crowding round Kulnitsky. His narrow, swarthy face with its handsomely curved beak of a nose expressed a mixture of dissatisfaction, lofty disdain and condescension. Black leather encased him like armour from head to foot—a shiny leather coat smelling of castor oil, riding breeches generously faced with soft leather, a leather cap on his head and patent-leather top-boots on his legs.

The very picture our enemies draw of a Communist, thought the chairman of the Novobugovka Kombed, looking with some dislike at this most beautiful figure.

"Ah, here's our Miroshnichenko!" Ivan Rudenko cried, and the smallpox scars round his nose stirred with his smile.

Kulnitsky turned sharply round, measured Miroshnichenko with a hostile look and asked in the tone of a public prosecutor, "Why are you late, Comrade Miroshnichenko?" Without waiting for an answer, he followed that up at once with another question, "Has the land been divided in Novobugovka?"

That made Miroshnichenko jump, like scalding water thrown over him. What lay behind it? A reprimand for delay, or something worse? He threw a quick glance at Rudenko standing just behind Kulnitsky, a glance which said, "Help!" The vice-chairman, an old friend of Miroshnichenko from partisan days, half closed one eye and let his head sink. That was enough.

"Yes, it's divided," Miroshnichenko answered firmly, and Rudenko smiled his relief.

"When did you manage it so quickly?" Kulnitsky's lips twisted sarcastically.

"Rose early and went to bed late. Some have ploughed already, and one or two have even sown," Miroshnichenko continued briskly.

The sparks of mischief in Rudenko's eyes flew into his lashes.

Kulnitsky drummed nervously on the table, pondering something, then brought his hard fingers down with a decisive rap.

"Comrade Miroshnichenko, we'll have to take six hundred dessiatines of Novobugovka land. What do you say to that?"

Misty circles swirled before Svirid Miroshnichenko and his throat contracted painfully. His mind's eye ranged over the village land and the thought of losing any hurt him as though it were all his own. It suddenly occurred to him that Fesyuk had felt the same about parting with his dessiatines, but then, Fesyuk had thought only of himself, while he saw hundreds of people before him. Like salvation they had hoped for that land which this leather-clad dandy was preparing to snatch away with a stroke of the pen.

"Six hundred dessiatines?" Miroshnichenko felt his voice was hard and flat as wood. "That's half the land the village was given by the Revolution."

"It is in the name of the Revolution that we are taking it." Kulnitsky placed one long leg forward.

"And have you thought what the peasants'll say about the Revolution?" Miroshnichenko passed his hand before his eyes to clear away the mist before them. "Gives with one hand, takes with the other!"

"I am not interested, Comrade Miroshnichenko, in what petty-bourgeois elements think, it is not they who will decide the future."

"Mind what you're saying, Comrade Kulnitsky!" Miroshnichenko seethed. "Remember these petty-bourgeois elements feed you, and defend their grain with their own blood, too!"

"And breed bandits, atamans and batkos," Kulnitsky said acidly.

"And they'll breed 'em faster still if you take away the land! Leave that sore spot of the village alone, you're no doctor for it!" The blue glint of the sea in Miroshnichenko's grey eyes darkened.

"And that's a Communist I'm listening to," Kulnitsky lowered his voice ominously. "He says there'll be more bandits. Maybe you're thinking of setting up as ataman yourself?"

Miroshnichenko's lips paled. Had the other continued it is hard to say what he might have done—thrown Kulnitsky out of the window, perhaps. But the dead silence was broken by Rudenko's reproving voice.

"That's going too far, Comrade Kulnitsky. Don't you know Comrade Miroshnichenko? How can you say things like that?"

Kulnitsky's thin face flushed, but he controlled himself—he knew he really had gone too far. And it was in a much calmer tone that he addressed Miroshnichenko again.

"You evidently didn't understand me properly. We are taking that land for our common cause—for the Lyubar State Farm. It needs assistance."

Miroshnichenko sighed with relief and almost smiled. A weight had rolled off his shoulders.

"We can't give the Lyubar State Farm a single dessiatine. There's a decision of the All-Ukrainian Revolutionary Committee about the farm, and we can't go against it."

"But we've got to help them! Assistance can't be a violation of the Committee decision. They say your land's better."

"The very same black soil. But with the way they farm it, the best soil on earth wouldn't help them. It's their farming you've got to change, not their land," Miroshnichenko said hotly.

"And just what is it about their farming that doesn't suit you?" Kulnitsky's protruding eyes were angry.

"Plenty! The men at the head don't know what proper farming is, they're like summer visitors with country cottages playing at gardening."

"They are all good Communists, Comrade Miroshnichenko," Kulnitsky snapped.

"Other places, maybe they're good Communists, but for the peasants, they're just summer visitors. Why, who's ever seen folks working an eight-hour day on a proper farm at harvest time, when a day feeds a year!"

"It's the working day in industry."

"And it's because of that working day that the grain fell from the ears before they got round to reaping, and now they're holding out their hands to the state like beggars—"Help us out, we're in a bad way!" It ought to be the other way round, *they* ought to be helping the state. No, I wouldn't give a bent copper to a state farm like that, let alone land."

"You have absolutely no idea what a big farm means! If we can only have state farms all over the country, and then unite them in giant trusts, we shall achieve economic emancipation from the small property-owner. That's the object to which we must direct our efforts!" Kulnitsky concluded hotly.

"You can stumble and catch your feet in that emancipation as if it was a melon field," said Miroshnichenko with barely concealed mockery. "One thing I do know—it's not trusts, it's the peasants who must have what's due to them at present. If you kill the peasant's age-old hope of land, then he'll only regard those trusts of yours as a new kind of serfdom."

"You're no Communist, you're just a dish rag!" Kulnitsky burst out, and bore his leather-clad form out in what was meant to be an effective exit.

"And you're naught but a stuffed leather coat!" Miroshnichenko shouted after him. He always finished anything he had started, even a quarrel.

"I shan't forget that," Kulnitsky snapped back from the doorway. "We'll be meeting again—rather differently."

"Very likely," Miroshnichenko agreed.

Alone in the room with Rudenko, Miroshnichenko flung the window open.

"Smoked this place up, you can choke in it." Frowning, he mentally shook off the unpleasant after-taste of his quarrel with Kulnitsky.

"What's got you into such a warlike mood today, Svirid?" Rudenko asked, looking at him curiously.

"Ugh—these smart lads in their leather coats can spoil all the very best we've got." Miroshnichenko began to seethe again. "He thinks Revolution means only shooting and mass meetings, beautiful words and conferences."

"I don't know what he thinks, but I do know one thing—you've made yourself an enemy. I don't envy you."

"Oh, to hell with him, Ivan. Give me that motor-cycle of yours again, I've got to get back and allot the land."

"All right, Svirid, go along and get it finished as quick as you can. Or one of these fine days the foul fiend'll bring Kulnitsky along your way, and then you'll be in for it—he'll call you a hardened liar all over the district."

"If only he keeps off till the day after tomorrow." Miroshnichenko wrung Rudenko's hand.

"Well—and so bourgeois feelings are still well rooted in you, eh?" The shallow smallpox scars round Rudenko's straight nose stirred again with his smile.

"Aye—and deep!" sighed Miroshnichenko. "When Kulnitsky started talking of those dessiatines, it was as though it was my very heart he was trying to tear out."

"Yes—it's not for nothing they say our muzhik's got a heart on one side and a clod of earth on the other."

"I don't know about that, but we've got it in our blood all right, that's a sure thing, Ivan. Can't you feel it yourself?"

"I can feel it, Svirid," Rudenko answered, then remembered something and smiled. "I almost forgot to tell you—we grabbed a profiteer the other day. Well, we don't want to let down a certain Kombed chairman, so we've set aside five hundred arshins of materials for your school."

"Thank you for that, Ivan." Miroshnichenko looked with gratitude at his friend. "Now we'll keep the school together."

"And start another rumour going, maybe?" laughed Rudenko.

"Not I. If the muzhiks get materials for children's clothes this year, they'll all be sure without me that they'll get top-boots at the very least next year. You have to understand the muzhik, Ivan, and feel for him, not abuse him."

"I'll do my best, Svirid," sighed Rudenko with exaggerated fervour, and the friends burst out laughing. They did not want to part, but the land called them both.

Soon Zamriborshch was driving Miroshnichenko at top speed back to Novobugovka. In the middle of the oak woods, however, the machine snorted indignantly, hesitated, jumped like a black grasshopper and stopped.

"Take a walk, Svirid Yakovlevich, while I see to this tricky brute." Zamriborshch jumped off. He wheeled the motor-cycle to the shoulder of the road and Miroshnichenko strolled into the edge of the wood, crushing a fairy ring of slender-legged fungi. Once upon a time he had thought this kind poisonous, but during his partisan days he had discovered that they were not only edible, but excellent, with a faint taste of garlic which made them very appetising.

Grand old oaks rose majestically from the underbrush at the edge of the wood, with fragments of sky gleaming blue through their leaves like springs of clear water rising from the green grass. Here and there pendant acorns or the silhouette of a bird stood out against this September blue. Close by, two jays started scolding like market-women; for a short time they disturbed the harmony of sounds, but the delicate voice of the woodland depths was even clearer by contrast.

A spring bubbled up beneath an arch of bird-cherry and wild apple-trees, and flowed away in a tiny brook, crystal clear as tears. On either side of the spring grew tufts of curly, delicately fine grass, each blade so slender that a dewdrop was too heavy a burden. Miroshnichenko frightened away the water-beetles swimming on the surface, drank deeply of the spring and then lay down close to it, his head on his folded arms.

The gentle sighing music of the young fir-trees enveloped Miroshnichenko. He felt himself drifting lightly over the woods, looking down to seek the village, when a pitiful squeak wakened him. He opened his eyes and what he saw startled him and stayed in his memory for a long time. On the very edge of the water sat a large, pop-eyed frog holding the legs of a tiny bird in its great jaws. The trustful little blue-tit had alighted to drink; now in mortal terror it was wildly flapping its wings, crying for help in pitiful squeaks.

Miroshnichenko jumped up, ran to the spring and placed his boot on the frog—not too heavily, so as not to hurt the bird. Bubbles appeared at the corners of the frog's great mouth and it released the blue-tit, which had barely strength to reach the bank, working frantically with wings and tail. The frog dived quickly into the spring.

17

The brothers gathered not in the cottage, but in the barn. Vasilinka wanted to join them, but her father sent her away. So she ran down to the pond and seated herself in the boat, hunched forward over arms crossed on her knees. She wondered what secret it was they were hiding from her—for grown-ups could not live without hiding something.

In the barn the three talked quietly.

"You're not the first, brother, and you aren't the last. Others have come back. Of course nobody turned out the band to meet them, but they weren't stood against the wall either. That's the way it is. They live quietly, they work—some of them even get a ration. And some went to fight Wrangel, so their families get land just like anyone else." With this and that Olexandr encouraged his brother.

"And did they take officers for the front?" asked Danilo, with more animation than he had hitherto shown.

"And glad to have them. The new government's an enemy only to enemies. That's the way things are."

"Maybe I could volunteer too?"

"Don't be in a rush," Miron advised. "You never know these days who's going to be on top tomorrow. The best thing is to keep quiet, so nobody'll notice you."

"Why were you in a rush to get your land, Miron—why didn't you wait a bit?" Olexandr cast an amused glance at his brother. "You ought to have kept quiet and watched when people got their allotments."

"It was the government gave me land. That was none of my doing. Who'd refuse it if it's given?"

"So you've got an excuse ready, in case you need it, eh?" Olexandr frowned and turned to Danilo. "We'll be waiting for you tomorrow at dawn, at the crossroads outside the village. We'll go to town, all three of us, since that's the way of it."

"Thanks, brother. But what had I better do with my revolver? Throw it into the pond?"

"No, they'll want to know what you've done with it," said Olexandr. "Better keep it and hand it over."

"But what if some devil grabs him on the way, with a gun in his pocket? He'll be done for then," said Miron, frowning.

"Give it to me, brother. That'll be best," said Olexandr decidedly.

Danilo took the flat Browning out of his pocket, followed it with the smooth cartridges and handed them to his brother with a sigh of relief.

"I think that's the lot."

"Let's sit down a bit for luck on your way," said Miron.

A smell of fish and honey came from him. In another ten years he would be grey, and the very picture of a kindly old bee-keeper. Just now, however, his kindness was overlaid by fear.

The brothers sat down where they were, on the threshing floor, their hands feeling the depressions left by the flails, their fingers sensing the coolness. Then all three rose, walked through the yard to the big gate and kissed in parting.

Danilo had crossed the dam when he heard the patter of a child's footsteps behind him.

"Uncle Danilo!" Vasilinka came running up with a bag. "Take some fish home with you, it'll be better than nothing." She handed him the homespun bag. Water trickled from the bottom and the freshly caught fish twisted and jumped inside.

That wrung Danilo's heart. Instead of him bringing a present for the little girl, she had given him one.

"Thank you, Vasilinka. But I don't need it . . ."

"Why not?" This was a surprise. "They're quite fresh, look, they're still alive, even. They're all carp, like silver, they are."

"Carp, you say?" he repeated.

The child nodded. "When the stars shine in autumn it's awfully easy to catch them in a net-trap, if you put in crushed sunflower seeds for bait."

"You know what we'll do with them?" Danilo went to a willow leaning out over the water.

"No."

"Let's take them and put them back in the water again. Let them remember us with words of kindness."

"But fish can't talk!" laughed the little girl.

"Maybe that's right, they can't, but they can remember us; after all, they'd rather be in the water than in the pan."

Cautiously he climbed out on to a small landing stage under the willow and took the first carp out of the bag. It lay on his hand like a slab of dull silver, its gills moving heavily. Danilo let it slip out of his hands. For an instant the fish lay motionless in the water, then it seemed to give itself a little shake and disappeared into the depths. Danilo released the others too, and gave the bag back to the child. She looked at him inquisitively, then asked, "Uncle Danilo, tell me—only tell me the real truth—why were you sorry for the carp?"

Danilo's lips trembled and it was with something between a laugh and a sigh that he answered, "Because your uncle's like a carp himself, Vasilinka."

"Oh, you *are* funny!" laughed the little girl, and snuggled up to him.

That laugh brought tears to his eyes. He gave the child a sudden hug, said good-bye and almost ran from her to the oak wood.

A dew-wet silence met him at the edge. In the sky, dark as fertile soil, shone the Plough, reminding him that the highest human wisdom lies in tilling the fields. Now and then Danilo stopped by a tree to concentrate on his emotion, to see more clearly the vision that beckoned in the distance, the vision that he had carried like a holy relic through all the sorrow of parting.

He knew that a really happy marriage is not very often found. Even those who marry for love often fritter away their treasure in the trivialities of daily life, so that after two or three years they have forgotten all about a quiet paradise and bear a creaking marriage yoke in weary disillusionment. But his marriage had been a melodious song. At first he feared the shadow of Nechuiviter might darken his happiness. He was tormented by the thought that the girl had known another's tenderness, another's kisses and it might be more. But his fears were vain. For Nechuiviter, Galya had friendship, for him—love. When they married she was a pretty girl with wonderful golden braids. With him she became a lovely woman, her child-like face opened from bud to flower, her slight figure developed and more than once his fists clenched as he saw some idler ogling his wife. "May you get salt in your eye," he would say to himself three times, for the peasant superstitions still lived in him, teacher though he was. Often he raged because he could not dress her well, but she quieted him—never mind, some day we'll have everything we want. What had she been thinking about? Not his salary, of course, but that future which Nechuiviter had promised. Danilo could not offer her even that.

How would Galya meet him? What remained of her love? Suppose it had turned to bitterness? He had cut off all other roads for her. Unbearable pain filled him at the thought. For she was his very life.

The woods thinned out in glades and paths. The moon, just risen, showed him the dark outlines of houses. Danilo went to the edge of the cutting, and from there through the vegetable plots to the centre of the village.

At the end of a narrow lane he saw an oaken cross, like a giant with outstretched arms. Entering another street, he saw a similar cross, and a third beside a sleeping cottage. Crosses stood on guard everywhere. That spring, when typhus had mowed down young and old alike, the village had implored God with these crosses to save it from disaster, and they still stood at all corners and by every well, mute witnesses to human ignorance and human suffering.

He passed an orchard, slipped across a street and saw before him the small school built by the community. Was she really here, so close—his love, his hope? Danilo stopped beside the stile with an acacia creaking over it. He wanted to hurry, to run to the school, to that little window through which his wife and Petrik looked out every day at the sun and the clouds, and perhaps even looked to see if he was coming at last. But all his strength seemed to have drained away. Swaying on uncertain feet, he went round to the other side of the schoolhouse, to the little brick porch leading to the teacher's room, and sat down in the shadow on the cold step. He listened, as though the school held a voice even in the night-time, as though it could tell him—all is well, nobody is here but your own family.

The coolness of the step drew the feverish heat from him. He rose—uncertainly, like a drunken man, and tapped on the edge of the window pane. He waited a minute, an endless minute, and tapped again. Then from inside came her voice, musical as a bell, a voice that made his heart want to leap from his breast.

"Oh—who's there?"

He wanted to smile but tears choked him.

"Galya—it's me, Danilo."

He heard a cry, heard something fall, heard his wife run to the door. He sought in whirling thoughts for words, the best, greatest, tenderest words, but could think of nothing fairer than those with which he had always greeted her when he returned home from a journey. "I've come back, my heart."

After an eternity the weather-worn door creaked open and his wife, weeping, flung herself on his neck.

"Danilo, my beloved, it's really you!"

He put his arms round her and held her to him closely, forgetting to say a single word. Then awkwardly he drew her, almost carried her inside, silently kissed the braids that lay heavily over his arm, bore her to the window and stood gazing at her happily, drinking in every familiar feature. Suddenly he remembered he had a son. But had he really? Perhaps it was a dream, a fantasy?

"Galya—is it true that we've got a son?"

"Yes, Danilo." She slipped out of his arms, and crossed the room with her bare feet, leading the father to a cradle. A baby's head could just be seen among a tumbled heap of rags.

Stooping, he walked all round the cradle, touched the rail with his finger and at last said, "I've come back, my heart."

A fresh burst of sobs answered him. Galya found his hand, drew him to the moonlit window and gazed through her tears at her husband's face, pale with emotion. This was her destiny, her future standing before her, she had chosen it herself, she had been proud and happy, and now her heart was breaking as she thought of what might happen to him. She would do anything, anything, if only they could be together, if only their child did not have to grow up without a father.

He saw the tears in her eyes, mysterious in the moonlight, and remembered how somebody had once said his wife's eyes were like cherries in the morning dew. It was true, they glowed and shone wonderfully against the paleness of her face. Danilo touched his wife's lashes with his lips and tasted their warm saltiness.

A cockerel crowed suddenly in the shed, another followed and wakened the child. He stirred and began to cry. Galya hurried to the cradle, picked up the boy and rocked him in her arms, humming a lullaby, then put him in his father's arms.

The tiny human being lay comfortably against Danilo and the mother, forgetting all grief, smiled through her tears at the child and her husband alternately.

"He's got two teeth already," she said proudly.

Danilo could not really judge the importance of this great news, but seeing how it seemed to please Galya, answered in wonder, "What, really two?" From his tone one might have thought it was two brains.

18

It was very late before the Novobugovka people left the fields. Some had not yet got their land, others were busy hammering in markers, while others again had harnessed their horses and begun to plough. The thin nags strained every sinew, pulling badly made ploughs, and nobody was surprised to see that some of those ploughs were worn almost to breaking point, while others had Austrian bayonets for ploughshares—bayonets which had sliced through pale flesh in the war and now sliced through the dark soil.

Timofi Goritsvit, hungry by the end of the day, rarely looked about him, but nothing escaped his notice. His legs were kept busy and even his tongue—in fact by evening he was quite hoarse with talking, something that had never happened to him before. A few more days like this, he thought, and I'll have no tongue left at all. He glanced under his brows at his son and smiled. Didn't think twice about breaking that pot over Sichkar's head. And wasn't scared, either. Good lad!

The good lad, meanwhile, was carefully keeping out of his father's way, having been well scolded, told that he should show respect to his elders, and that his mother didn't make milk cereal to be poured over heads. Dmitro wanted to run back home and get something else for his father to eat, but Timofi stopped him.

"I've never yet had two dinners brought me in one day," he said, and the muzhiks laughed.

Vasili Karpets hurried to his cart and came back with vodka and a hunk of barley bread, rubbed with garlic till it shone.

"Here, take a drink, Timofi, it'll make your feet go more merrily." Vasili had quite forgotten that he was to go to law with Sozonenko; the spirit had brought gaiety not only to his feet but to his broad face with its half-moon of copery whiskers.

"I don't drink when I'm working, Vasili, thanks all the same," Timofi answered, putting the glass aside. "That's for when you're finished."

Vasili, however, was in no way abashed.

"You can drink to the Revolution, Timofi, even when you're working—when it's such great work as today's."

Then Timofi thrust his measure into the ground, took the glass and the bread and looked at the people round about him.

"To the Revolution!"

"Long live the Revolution."

The glass went from hand to hand and everyone ceremoniously drank to the Revolution as they stood in the fields—for it was the Revolution which had made those fields theirs.

The molten clouds in the west had smouldered to ashes and merged with the darkness when Goritsvit returned home with his son and Kushnir. It was darkest in the hollows where the mist was rising over the rustling willows and gently enfolding the earth. Timofi laid his arm across his son's shoulder, and Dmitro pressed close to his father as he had in childhood. They had no need for words as they stood silently for a moment, gazing at the vague outlines of trees over the stream, listening to the song coming from the end cottage.

"Why didn't you go to your carpentering today?" asked Timofi, when they had crossed the bridge.

"I couldn't," answered the lad with a sigh. "How could anyone in the village work today?"

"The call of land, eh?"

"What d'you think? I was hoping ours would be measured out."

"A bit of patience, son."

"I haven't any left. And where'll we get a horse? Ours—a puff of wind would blow him over."

"We'll likely have to borrow from Grandad and maybe from Miroshnichenko's brother too. Don't lose another day tomorrow, lad, or old Gorenko'll lay his measure across your shoulders."

"Like as not," Dmitro agreed with a smile. "He's always got it handy. But I'll try to get away and come towards evening, at least."

"Well, if it's evening—all right." Turning to Kushnir he cried: "Stepan, I don't remember seeing Vasili's widow out on the field today."

"Olga wasn't there," Kushnir threw back over his shoulder as he strode in front through the mist.

"Is she ill, maybe?"

"I don't know."

"Go and find out, will you?"

"All right," Kushnir agreed, although hesitantly. For that day he had intended, for the first time in a week, to see the blacksmith's daughter Yulka Shapoval with her sharp tongue and an attraction that lay in her figure more than her face. The folds of her simple clothes could not cloak the appeal of her youthful body, and her firmly moulded breasts seemed to be awaiting maternity. Stepan, not particularly shy among the girls, caught himself thinking almost the first time in his life that it was high time for him to marry, to settle down with a wife and children. Yulka fascinated him, but would not let him lay a finger on her—and the slap she gave his questing hands was as hard as a man's. Where had she got such strength? He actually asked her that one day, but she only smiled mysteriously.

"I was letting you down easy, not hitting really hard."

"Are you trying to raise your value?"

"No—just the opposite," she answered and for some reason sighed.

With the idea of meeting her family, Stepan went to her father to have an iron rim put on a wheel. While the metal was heating on the forge, the smith called his daughter from the garden. She flushed in embarrassment when she saw Stepan. Her father laid the rim on the anvil, gave Stepan the tongs and told him to keep it firm, while Yulka picked up the heavy hammer. Before the amazed Stepan realized what was happening, father and daughter hammered his rim and pulled it over the wheel. Then he realized that she had indeed let him off lightly, and he reflected sadly that it would be the devil of a job keeping the upper hand of a wife like that.

Stepan said good-night to Goritsvit, went home and washed under the pump, changed his clothes and set off to seek Olga.

The moon was rising over the orchards, somebody was whetting a scythe in its light, preparing to get in the millet or the late buckwheat. Here and there faint lights were extinguished in the cottages and the silence of night enfolded them. Stepan went to the Pidoprigora gate and stopped, irresolute. Should he go in or not? He feared that singing of old Bogdanikha, and Olga's tears. But at last he opened the gate and entered the yard. By the shed a heap of threshed straw gleamed in the cold light; the wind raised separate straws, now here, now there, and they sang faintly like the notes of a pipe.

A light was still burning inside, but the door was bolted. He pulled at the ring, and a moment later Olga appeared. She looked like a nun, with black brows standing out sharply on her thin white face and dark circles beneath her hollow eyes. She did not smile, she spoke no word, but a line carved down her chin twitched nervously. Stepan felt the great distance which suffering had placed between them; his conscience pricked painfully—how could he have been actually thinking of flirtation, of love? He did not dare even to address her simply by her christian name.

"Olga Viktorovna, why didn't you come to the fields?"

"The fields? Why?"

"Why?" Stepan stammered. "To get your land."

"Land?" She repeated the word in a strange voice which still, even in her grief, was clear and melodious. "I don't want any land. It took my Vasili away from me. . . . I don't want anything." She clutched at the door-post and gasped for breath.

Stepan quickly supported her with both hands, fearing she would fall. The single tear that fell from the widow's eye seemed to burn his hand to the bone.

"Olga—don't!" he implored, feeling the shaking of her shoulder beneath his hand.

"Go away, Stepan, don't torment me." She straightened up, and he felt blinded by the gleam of her tear-filled eyes and the pain on her tortured face.

"But the land, Olga?" Once more he tried to bring her thoughts to the thing dearest to a peasant.

"It won't bring Vasili back."

"That's true, of course, land won't bring back the dead." Kushnir's voice took on a stubborn note. "But without it you can't live, either. The land is a great thing."

"Take it yourself, then, I shan't grudge it you."

The widow moved back into the entry and then disappeared through the inner door.

Stepan stood where he was for a moment, still seeing the woman's form before him. He remembered that he had hoped to spend the evening with Yulka; but for some reason her attraction had paled. Thoughtfully, with hanging head, he left the house.

Beside the shed something sighed softly, and for a moment he imagined it was Olga. He looked about him—but there was nobody, only the straw gleaming greenish-gold in the moonlight, singing like invisible pipes in the wind.

19

From the north the town began with deep gulleys running in broken fold almost to the highway and topped with humped granite spurs. Beyond the gulleys lay dry land strewed with grey stones like skulls and bones, making one think of a washed-out graveyard of giants. But on the other side of the road the rich black soil stretched to the very horizon, turning its back, as it were, on the grim, stony primeval waste.

Once upon a time, before the war, ragged quarrymen had torn out stone there to make homes for the living and crosses for the dead. Now, once a week, a kind of market was held in this old quarry. Melancholy horses dozed under the warm sun and suckling pigs squealed their shrill protest at being taken from freedom and mud and thrust into dark sacks. Trade was not very brisk, but on the other hand, the most amazing things could be bought, from the clothing of bandits' victims to rare pills and light machine-guns.

As they approached the gully where the market was in full swing, Olexandr stopped Danilo with a hand on his arm.

"Come, brother, let's take a look at this assembly," he said with a jerk of his head.

"What for?" asked Danilo in surprise.

Along the road he had borne his burden of sombre thoughts, trying to see ahead, even if only for one day. His cheeks still carried the memory of his wife's kiss, her tears, and his ears held a child's crowing laughter. Before he left, he and Galya had sat on the stone door-step and decided it would be best to conceal nothing from the new authorities.

"Miron and I want to get you a pair of top-boots. For our sort of folks, they're the most important thing," said Olexandr.

"Yes, you won't get far in those," and Miron pointed at his brother's old patched boots, the kind worn by seasonal labourers.

"All right, if you've the money, get them," Danilo assented. "Maybe I'll be able to pay you back some day." In his heart he was glad for another half-hour's respite, glad to postpone even for that brief space the dreadful moment when he must face the military commandant and the Cheka.

The brothers descended a stony path into the gulley. Suspicious-looking individuals slunk about whispering insinuatingly or displaying goods from under their coats.

The brothers halted beside a cobbler humped on his stool, hammering a sole to its upper. A tall, husky fellow in one boot stood behind him, eating bread and pork fat with obvious enjoyment, his eyes ranging over the crowd. Danilo unconsciously noted his unusual face, particularly the hooked nose with cheeks slanting from it to his ears, as though fearing the vicinity of that ferocious beak.

Miron enquired the price of some top-boots with the broad toes fashionable at the time. The cobbler looked up at the brothers, and without removing the nails from his mouth, told them, "They're for sale, but only for good money."

"What d'you mean by good money?"

"The tsar's. I've no use for any of those other governments."

"And have they any use for you, Vasyuta?" laughed one of the customers.

"Makes no difference to me," mumbled Vasyuta, without stopping work. Then he removed the nails from his mouth and began lazily bargaining with Miron.

While this was going on, Danilo noticed the husky fellow in one boot eyeing him intently. Then the fellow slid up to the brothers and drew Danilo aside.

"See here, mate," he whispered, his beak almost in Danilo's ear, "I can help you get some real boots, good enough for a general."

"Where are they?"

"We'll find them, that is, if you can find me a bit of a toy." The fellow's mouth was right against Danilo's ear.

"What toy do you mean?"

"Don't play innocent, mate. You were fighting not so long ago, sticks out all over you. Now, bring me one o' these toys," he held up his forefinger and

moved it as though pulling a trigger, "and I'll get you boots, the kind you won't wear out in ten years."

Danilo turned pale. Was this provocation, or was it really a bandit deal being offered him? He went up to his brothers, pulled them away from the cobbler and all three walked rapidly to the district executive office. There Olexandr gave Danilo a mess-tin with food and his gun, clapped him on the shoulder—don't worry, lad—while Miron made the sign of the cross over him.

On the top step Danilo looked back once more and tried to smile at his brothers, but his lips trembled pitifully. Abruptly he turned and with eyes shut tight he crossed the threshold as though stepping over a precipice.

A young girl with cropped hair and a red bow at her neck came forward to meet him. She was humming, and her whole carefree look said that she had found her place in the world.

"Would you tell me where the military commandant is?" asked Danilo.

"Come this way," the girl answered.

She led him to a large room with a barrier, behind which a Red Armyman with a bandaged head was pecking out words on a typewriter.

"What's your business, please?" asked the girl, with a glance at another door bearing a plate with the words, "Military Commandant."

"I've come to give myself up," said Danilo, dropping his eyes.

"Bandit? Or one of Petlyura's?" asked the girl, without the slightest sign of surprise.

"Petlyura's."

The Red Armyman with the bandaged head glanced at Danilo and went on with his typing. Obviously this was not the first such visitor.

"Will you wait a moment, please." With the same lack of haste the girl disappeared through the office door.

That moment was an eternity. But at last the door opened again and the girl called him. He entered a tidy room and halted before a youth of about twenty or twenty-two in Red Cossack uniform. Could this be the famous squadron commander who had terrified the White Poles and challenged the fiercest enemies to a sabre fight? Olexandr had told him Comrade Klimenko had not left the battlefield even with two bullet wounds. His Cossacks held him up and he continued to command the battle until the encircling pincers were broken and he led his men out of the ring.

Lines of painful distaste lay round the commandant's eyes and lips. Over his high forehead curly hair fell in confusion, pale below like ears of rye, dark russet on top.

"Sit down." He nodded towards a chair and seated himself opposite Danilo. "A local man?" The early lines on his forehead twitched.

"Yes, from Novobugovka."

"Who's your father? Kulak? Priest?"

"A poor peasant."

"Is that so?" said the commandant in surprise. "Tina, get me a questionnaire form."

The girl went to a cupboard, delved among a number of papers and then laid before Danilo a sheet of stiff paper which was to contain his particulars.

"Have you been back long?" asked the commandant in a level voice and pulled out a packet of cigarettes. "Smoke?"

He held out the packet and Danilo drew out a cigarette. Sweat beaded his face as though it were a millstone he were pulling.

"I came back the day before yesterday. I was a sotnik . . ." He was in a hurry to tell everything about himself, to get the torment over.

"Why did you desert your ataman?" Now Klimenko's eyes and the lines round eyes and mouth held a note of gaiety. "Petlyura's candle burning down, eh?"

Danilo could understand the young commandant's gladness—uneased pain was conquered by the triumph of victory. But had he also the magnanimity of the victor? Thoughtfully Danilo answered, "Burning down at both ends."

"You're right there, at both ends!" The commandant's almond-shaped eyes flashed.

Danilo felt a surge of relief. At least this was not the commandant pictured by Petlyura propaganda and his own alarmed imagination.

"Tell me just how you came to us." The commandant drew a sheet of paper closer and his two-coloured mop of hair fell over it. "Only think a bit first," he added, seeing Danilo's agitation. He had sufficient experience to recognize the kind of man before him.

Danilo began his story, which at once interested the commandant. He asked a great many questions about Pogiba and Barabolya; he carefully checked and noted down distinguishing marks by which they could be recognized, he could not forgive Danilo for not putting an end to Pogiba, and suddenly drew three conclusions—snakes bite wherever they are, the sotnik was not really a regular officer, he was a teacher by profession.

When Danilo, wet with perspiration, ended his story Klimenko asked only one thing, "You haven't forgotten anything important?"

Danilo appreciated his tact, for what the question really meant was—had he concealed anything?

"I've told you everything, all there is." He looked straight into Klimenko's eyes. "My wife and I decided I ought to tell the whole truth, no matter how bitter it was."

"You were quite right." The commandant nodded approvingly. "Now fill in that questionnaire."

At that moment the door opened to admit a thin, swarthy youth who helped himself along with a stick.

Klimenko went quickly to meet him, greeted him with every sign of pleasure and gave him a chair. His right eyebrow, always somewhat higher than the left, now had a mischievous tilt.

"Come for information again, Kindrat, or just to sit and chat?"

"It's information I'm wanting," sighed Kindrat despondently. "Will you or will you not tell me something about yourself? I've asked you a dozen times."

"When I've a bit of time free—I'm busy today."

"That's what you always say. Can't you understand, the material I want is needed for history?"

"Not history, Kindrat, just your pamphlet," said Klimenko, and to smooth over any derogatory implication he added pacifically, "I really can't manage it today, lad. But look, you write about Petlyura's lot too. Maybe you can get something from a former sotnik?" He indicated Danilo, who was just finishing his questionnaire.

"Yes, that's interesting, of course," the youth agreed eagerly, and moved his chair closer to Danilo. "Look, can you talk to me frankly? But absolutely frankly, you understand?"

"I can do that," Danilo agreed reluctantly. "Only there's a lot of things I don't look at as you do, and you may think I'm not being frank."

"It's the way you see things that I want, that's what's valuable," Kindrat assured him. "Look—were you in any party before the Civil War—Social Democrats, Workers' Party, Ukrainian Labour Party for instance?"

"No. Party fights never interested me, I kept out."

"What did interest you, then?"

"Literature and ethnography."

"Did you collect anything, or have anything published?"

"A few ethnographic notes were printed."

"And how did you come to join Petlyura?"

"That's not a very pleasant subject."

"I know, but all the same—well, what was it that took you, an intellectual, to him?"

"Circumstances, that's all." With a sigh Danilo gazed at the window, maralling his thoughts.

Outside, dark clouds loomed on one side, while on the other the sun shone brightly. Sparrows were squabbling in a hollow and the warm sunshine was drying the dew off the knot-weed. A young woman, her supple body swaying, crossed the road with two buckets of water that caught the sunshine. All this was life. But what could one call that sickness which he, and not he alone, had caught and suffered? And what use explaining to a beardless youth who would in any case lump him together with all the rest in his pamphlet?

Once more he measured Kindrat with his eyes and began.

"I remember very well the spring of 1918 when that circus hetman Skoropadsky sat on the Ukrainian throne. In his Kiev circus he kissed the landowners and said solemnly, 'I pray that God will give us power to save the Ukraine.' You know it was not from God he got his power, but from the Kaiser, and because of that power the Ukraine was flogged by punitive expeditions. Not that it stopped at flogging. In our Podolye region and Brailov way the Germans and the Haidamaks actually had queues lined up for the gallows—there weren't enough for all the unfortunate muzhiks who had displeased the master or his

agent. Well, the villages took up axes and pitchforks. Peasant detachments formed in the woods and prepared to fight to the death. And just at that time Petlyura raised his forces in Belya Tserkov, printed his universal proclamation against Skoropadsky, called him the tsar's hireling, a traitor, a false hetman and declared him outlawed for crimes against the independent Ukrainian republic, for mass arrests, for the destruction of villages and for violence against workers and peasants. A lot of people believed in him at that time, and I was one of them. I left my wife and went to Belya Tserkov to free the Ukraine from foreigners and from our own landowners too. I thought I was fighting for liberty, sweeping away the garbage of feudalism. Well, you know the rest, what I left was bad and what I found was worse."

"That's right enough," Kindrat nodded. "But when you gradually realized that Petlyura's line meant betrayal, why didn't you leave him sooner, and join the Reds?"

"I was afraid," Danilo confessed. "And not just for my own skin. You asked for frankness, well, I'll tell you everything that's kept me back all this time. It was Ukrainian patriotism. Right from the beginning Petlyura managed to appeal to our national feeling, and made us believe that the Bolsheviks were against the Ukrainian nation. And strange as it may seem, some of your own military and political leaders helped him."

"I suppose you're referring to things said by Bukharin and Pyatakov?" asked the commandant.

"Yes, and also the dreadful things done by Muravyov and some of the local leaders. Ukrainian intellectuals were angered by the obstacles to our national regeneration and development, the lack of clarity about Ukrainian statehood and language, and Muravyov's slaughterings showed the Bolsheviks in a very bad light. For a time, Petlyura used all this cleverly and played on the indignation of the Ukrainian intellectuals. I expect you know what a fine talker he was. He's no gifts as a general, no statesmanship, no literary ability, not even the ordinary decency of an honest man, but he does have a real silver tongue. He relied on foreign bayonets and that silver tongue—and still does. . . . Well, so there you have the reason why I didn't leave him sooner. The lack of clarity in the national question troubled me until very recently."

"You say it troubled you. Does that mean it doesn't trouble you any longer?" The commandant rose, remembering the Muravyov slaughter.

"Not as much as it did, though I haven't got everything quite clear yet."

"What made you think differently?"

"Petlyura himself. I saw he was just making use of our national feeling, while he sold the Ukraine to foreigners. And then, too, I was very much impressed by the Red Army Order signed by Lenin which said the Red Army came to the Ukraine as the protector of the Ukrainians and of the Ukrainian culture. So there you have it all—the fall and salvation of one man." Danilo smiled without mirth and rose, asking, "Do I go to the Cheka now?"

As he spoke the words he felt a chill run down him—the most terrible

moment of his life was approaching. He had heard so much about the Cheka that even the very name in a newspaper article alarmed him.

The commandant looked at him through narrowed eyes, and fine lines sprayed out from their corners.

"I don't think there's any need for that. They all left today for an outlying village of this district. I'll hand in your papers."

"What shall I do, then?"

"Go back home," smiled the commandant. "But first of all, you could go to the head of the Ukrainian Education Department. It's soon to start courses for teachers. You could attend one of those, and then go back to teaching."

"And will they give me teaching work—*me*?" Danilo could hardly believe his ears, he thought the man must be laughing at him.

"Most certainly. We're short of teachers. But you'll have to work hard."

"My God, I'll work for three." He fell rather than sat down on his chair, felt in his knapsack for his gun, then raised his hand again to wipe his forehead. He looked with inexpressible gratitude at the commandant, who observed him with a sly twinkle. "Better leave God out of it, Danilo Petrovich. I don't believe in him overmuch."

Danilo nodded happily, thinking—my God, is it possible that all the fears and troubles are over, like in a Christmas story?

20

The earth cannot live without sunshine, and man cannot live without joy. In the hours of greatest suffering and agitation the heart is like a spring that clears itself of slime; that is when one understands the true value of humaneness, and arrives at the realization of happiness. At such times one comes to understand, with amazement, how little and how much one needs in life, how badly one followed one's own path, how mechanically one said "good day" without making the day good, and worst of all—even complaining about it, for the dust of the commonplace frequently dimmed the tender rays of sunshine.

Such were the thoughts seething in Danilo Pidoprigora's mind as he looked at the earth, and his wife, and his child. He saw the sunshine and smiled at it, he blew through Petrik's soft hair and felt a swooning happiness, he kissed his wife's slender feet and worshipped the holiness of a woman's body.

His wife lay on her unbound hair as on a golden sheaf, and her sweet, almost childish face made him think of Ribera's "Inez." She was still shy of letting him see her naked breasts and dropped her great eyes before his. He was sometimes even frightened by this—what could she find to love in him? Perhaps she had married him as girls sometimes do, at the age of sixteen, themselves not knowing why. A new moon in the sky, the intoxication of a kiss—and girlhood is gone for ever like a ripple on the stream.

No, his Galya's love was not of this kind. Her heart had already turned to Nechuiviter when he, Danilo, first saw her. For her, Nechuiviter had been the rousing tocsin but he had been the flute softly winning the ear with familiar

melodies. The tocsin had awakened a glad, far-reaching but frightening response, it had resounded from the Ukraine right to Siberia, but the flute drew one to May nights, to fragrant stacks, to rosemary and to love. The girl's spirit fell away from the magnificent unknown and turned to familiar, accustomed shores. And in the evenings, instead of the words revolution, party, uprising, rotting tsarism, bourgeoisie, capitalists and October she heard endearing words and loving pet names—sweetheart, my love, dear heart—and, very occasionally, something about the Ukraine's autonomy and its national demands.

In the spring they met, in the winter they were married. All the guests invited came to the wedding except Nechuiviter—on the wedding day the gendarmes descended on his room, searched it and took him off to jail. He only just had time to give his landlady a silk kerchief for the bride. But that flowered silk did not lie on her head, it lay like a heavy reproach on her conscience. Galya hid it, embarrassed, from herself and her husband, and it was only now, after years had passed, that she put it on because she had nothing else. And for some reason it occurred to Danilo that Bolshevism too, perhaps, could become a need, though not at once, that not everyone came to it easily. But he could ponder that later, now he wanted to think only of his happiness, his return to life, to lose himself in that to the exclusion of everything else.

Evening flowed into their room in a flood of enchanted blue, and the thick stars of September rose in the sky. He felt as though this evening and the stars and the shy smile of his wife soothed and smoothed his crumpled spirit, washed it with new hopes.

"Galya!" He stooped over her half uncovered bosom and slid his arm beneath her shoulders.

"What is it, darling?" she whispered.

"Nothing. Only it's wonderful that there is such a word—Galya."

"That's how I've thought of your name."

"Yes?" He bent lower over his wife until he felt the soft touch of her eyelashes on his cheek. And that too was happiness.

Every man, no matter how bad he has been, still cherishes some sacred spot in his heart or his memory. Danilo had two such refuges—the country-side in spring that reminded him of childhood, its glades yellow with buttercups, its ponds smooth, and the fragrant spirit of his wife. In those years of separation he had dreamed of the land of his childhood. Those dreams had brought it to him a hundred times fairer, and in the midst he had always seen his wife. But when he spoke of this to his mate Yevsei Golovan, in times of leisure after supper, a patronizing smile would appear beneath Yevsei's moustache and would not go.

"That's all idealization, stylization, the unpurged psychology of the backward muzhik for whom a long-horned ox is the greatest treasure and a shy lass the ideal of beauty."

Golovan had been spoiled rather than educated in Western Europe, he had acquired the highest admiration for its "practical common sense," the "stability" of the western countries and the psychological analysis that unravelled to the

last thread all the emotions of queen and prostitute alike. He knew a number of languages but spoke Ukrainian with the cold indifference of a foreigner; everything breathing of the Ukrainian spirit he dubbed stylization and turned his back on it as something pre-historic, primitive and beneath his lofty notice. A fragment of his native soil, the simple song of a girl or a woman's goodness could not move him, he was accustomed to live and love in a practical, business-like way.

Why did Danilo think of this now? Simply because his happiness of the present still bore the shadow of the past and fear of the future. For after all, who could say what might happen to him tomorrow? The southern wing of the front still hovered over the Bug. But he drove away sombre thoughts and went up to the cradle. In a basket of reeds lay a minute human being, now and then smacking his lips as though dreaming he was at his mother's breast. How wonderfully everything was arranged!

"Is he asleep?" asked Galya anxiously, rising from the bed.

"Yes." He laid his finger to his lip and went to the table, where a sheet of paper lay beside a bottle of ink. Today, after a long break, he had returned with deep enjoyment to his ethnographic notes, weaving songs and sayings into them. They held for him the fragrance of the golden fields, the good smell of rye bread. He was filled with a glowing faith in the human spirit.

Again the cockerels crowed in comically breaking voices; Petrik wakened and began to cry. The mother hurried over to him and Danilo went to the window, smiling.

A shooting-star burst in spray that fell like greenish drops of dew, and in their light a tree stood out for a moment like a dark goblet. A britchka came along the road and stopped by the fence. Three men jumped lightly out and ran in a stooping posture to the school, their arms extended in the pose of those who carry weapons. Their cautious steps hardly seemed to touch the blue-misted earth.

"Galya," Danilo sighed and left the window, where the shadow of an unknown figure now stood.

She could hear something ominous in his voice and hurried over to him, just as a knock sounded on the door.

"They've come for me, Galya."

He put his arms round his wife and kissed her forehead and golden braids.

"No—no—!" Her whole body trembled. "You told them everything, everything."

What if it's bandits? Came the searing thought, and bitterly he regretted having surrendered his gun.

"Who's there?" he called in a wooden voice, hearing the weeping of Galya and Petrik behind him.

"Open the door, Citizen Pidoprigora," came the answer in authoritative tones.

"Who are you?"

"From the regional Cheka."



The footsteps of two more came to him from the entry.

The axe fell from Danilo's hands. His wife screamed and flung herself on him, but he was already moving forward—he felt it was his whole body, not just his legs advancing—and with fumbling hands he unfastened the door. A pocket torch blinded him and hard lips asked, "Are you Citizen Pidoprigora?"

"Yes," he answered mechanically, and the hard lips said, "In the name of the Republic, you are under arrest."

"What for?" burst from him.

"What for?" Galya thrust herself between them.

"You know best yourself," was the pitiless answer, and a second electric torch danced merrily over the room, lighting up his wife's hair, Petrik in the cradle and the clean paper on the table.

Held on both sides, Danilo was led out into the street and put into the britchka. His wife grasped his legs. She was torn from him, the britchka moved away. With a scream the woman ran behind it, her hair streaming out.

One of the convoy looked back, pitying her. "A fine girl."

Danilo jumped up from the leather seat. "Let me go! Why are you taking me?" But firm hands held him. His head twisted painfully, he saw her fall. Small, far away from him, she lay like a sheaf lost and forgotten on the road.

The britchka rolled along the highway, the ancient lime-trees with the sleeping birds flowed past like fleeting hopes, the crosses protecting the village against typhus disappeared and the horses' hooves beat out, "Che-ka, Che-ka."

21

Ivan Sichkar's pond in the forest lay peacefully in the sunshine under a swarm of midges. Curly-headed willows stood on the banks, and lacy clouds were reflected in the depths.

A boat slipped quietly from the bank. Silver-bearded Grandad Nikodim, glasses on nose, sat hunched in it reading the Bible. Formerly he had glanced

into sacred books on Sundays and Church holidays, but now his hands were useless for any kind of work, he pored over the Bible on weekdays too. The boat rocked gently, the letters swam before his eyes and beyond the water he saw a distant kingdom, the dreadful Jehovah of the Jews, the meek Jesus and his apostles. And the old man who had drifted far from the present day, sighed deeply. In olden times God and his Chosen walked the earth, now it seemed given over to the children of Satan. And he need not go far to seek them when he even feared his own grandson—and the old man turned his head to the tall fence that formed such a strong, dense protection round buildings, orchard and vegetable garden that a snake could not have slipped through.

Old Nikodim had no love for his grandson, a bandit without God in his heart, and although Ivan was going back to prison that day, the old man did not grieve about it.

If only they make a proper, God-fearing man of him there, the child of Satan, thought the old man. He's no human feeling for man or beast. It's just money, money, money all the time with him.

Danilo Zayatchuk appeared on the old road with its shallow ruts gleaming pale among the grass and knot-weed covering it. He saw old Nikodim and a smile lighted his rugged face. He took off his worn old cap.

"Good day, Grandad Nikodim," he called over the dreaming pond. "How's your health? Going to last out another winter?"

"Now what sort of health can an old man like me have?"

"The young 'uns aren't so chirpy these days, either." Zayatchuk's bald head gleamed in the sunshine. "Folks are cut off at the root, and their health too."

The old man raised his finger.

"Fear not those who can kill the body, for the soul cannot be killed."

"That's all right, but it's a pity about the body too," sighed Zayatchuk, thrusting his fingers into a shaggy beard. "Is Ivan at home?"

"Where else would he be?"

"Getting ready for the road?"

"He ought to be ready by now. Go along, go along quick, or the vodka may spoil before you get there."

"He-he-he! It won't spoil, Grandad, we'll manage to save it somehow," laughed Zayatchuk and made his way gaily into the yard. There his eye was caught by something new—a hawthorn hedge had been planted inside the fence.

Look at that, nobody'll be able to get over now, he thought, examining the thorny bushes. If they do they'll leave their eyes behind them.

By the gaping mouth of the shed Sichkar's labourer was greasing a britchka axle; although he wore rags for clothes, he was whistling gaily, and his whole body and his grease brush seemed to dance in time to the tune. Zayatchuk had often noticed that this shock-headed feather-brained lad, actually only a boy, jiggled even in church, and when the lads and lasses gathered for merrymaking he came in his rags and cut such capers that even the dead would have risen to laugh.

"Where's Uncle Ivan, Pavlo?"

Pavlo Troyan turned briskly to Zayatchuk and pointed with his brush to the other end of the yard.

"He's in the vegetable plot."

"Is the master leaving you?"

"Yes, seems like he's going," answered the lad, and started whistling another tune.

"Maybe there won't be much for you to do here? If so, you can come to me." Zayatchuk lowered his voice for the last words. He knew what a good, quick worker Pavlo was, and had often thought of getting him away from Sichkar.

"Maybe, and we'll not quarrel about wages if the food's fit to eat."

A twinkle danced in the corners of Pavlo's grey eyes. For a long time he had been thoroughly sick of working for the harsh Sichkar who thrashed even his own wife. The previous year Pavlo had wanted to run away with the Red Cossacks, but they said he was not big enough for a horse and sabre and refused to take him. A pity he had not thought to get hold of one of the colts—they wouldn't have refused him then.

Zayatchuk went up to Pavlo and said wheedlingly: "You won't go about in rags like that if you work for me, lad. Come along tomorrow and we'll talk about it." He turned and marched with dignity towards Sichkar's big vegetable plot.

Beyond the maize with its darkening beards lay unreaped millet bending to the ground, then came bluish cabbage and further on the dropping heads of sunflowers. In the midst of all this loomed the heavy figure of Ivan Sichkar, lopping off old sunflower heads with shears, leaving the curly young ones on mutilated stems.

These tall sunflower stalks made Zayatchuk think of human figures. He watched Sichkar handling his shears and laughed.

"Cutting off the heads of the fathers?"

Sichkar seemed to understand Zayatchuk's thought. Waving the shears, he set his foot on a large sunflower head as he answered significantly, "The heads of the fathers need to come off, but as for the children, let them live."

His gruff voice and the mockery on his scarred, disfigured face sent a cold chill down his visitor, who began to regret trying to entice Pavlo away. Perhaps it would be better to discuss it with Ivan himself; after all, he wasn't so very well satisfied with his labourer.

Sichkar's quick-eyed wife Zinka came hurrying along the path—corpulent, short-legged, the broad sleeves of her white blouse flapping; the millet fell back as though in fear from her bright red skirt and sparrows rose with an agitated chirping.

"Ivan, come quickly, our guests are angry. What a time to start working! Good day, Danilo."

"Good health to you, Zinka. Getting handsomer every day." He smiled into the woman's plump face that seemed to be bursting with health.

"What time's this to be thinking of handsomeness?" Crossing her arms over



Blast-furnacemen (A fragment)

By Mikhail Trufanov (R.S.F.S.R.)

her breast she sighed for Ivan; but at the same time she made eyes at Danilo who might not be handsome, but was as strong as a bull.

Ivan glanced at his wife and his spirits fell. He had no very great desire to leave all this spacious freedom and return to the stone walls of a prison. Why had he been so stubborn? He ought to have handed in the grain, and then he wouldn't be food for prison bugs. And it was all Miroshnichenko's fault. Well—Svirid wouldn't be treading the weeds much longer, he'd follow Pidoprigora.

Sichkar went to the path where his top-boots lay, shook the golden sunflower dust from his clothes and standing on one foot, began carefully winding the foot-cloth round his fat white leg. The sparrows were still chirping as they flew here and there, over the sunflowers. A mixed fragrance of hemp and bruised sunflower came to Sichkar's nostrils, and his anger against Miroshnichenko mounted.

Indoors, the table was laid, but the guests were standing round the doorway and the great chest. When the master of the house entered they greeted him in tones of sympathy, with sighs and long faces, and sat down on benches and stools. Somebody noticed that Old Nikodim was not there, but Zinka explained, to a chorus of approving laughter, that since there'd been this new government Grandad never looked at a sinful glass, only at holy books.

"God grant our Ivan a good journey, and may he soon return to his farm and his wife." Larion Denisenko solemnly raised his glass. The guests chorussed, "God grant it," and Ivan dolefully exchanged a glance with Nastya, who was probably sorrier than anyone else that he was leaving the village. Even her angry eyes held tears. Zinka saw the direction of her husband's looks and seethed with fury, but she made no sign, only pursed her lips affectedly. If he could have eyes for that drab at a time like this, no need for her, Zinka, to worry about being faithful to him.

They did not sit long; there was no cause for merrymaking, and the majority were, in fact, thinking less about Sichkar than about their own land.

After speeding his guests at the gate, their host once more walked heavily round the yard, threw a bursting sack of food into the britchka, carefully placed two bottles of home-distilled vodka beside it and seated his wife at the back. Pavlo had harnessed the horses and was preparing to jump in when Sichkar took the whip from him.

"You stop at home, I'll drive myself."

"But how about getting back?" asked the lad in surprise.

"The mistress'll drive," said Ivan. "She'll have to learn a lot of things, with this new government."

The spirited horses galloped out of the yard and raced past the pond where old Nikodim, hunched in his boat, was still sedulously reading the Bible.

"Why didn't you take Pavlo?" the woman asked. "I'm frightened to death of these horses."

"Learn to do your own driving, the commune's coming," her husband cut her short, and not another word did he say until they came to the village.

Got his head full of Nastya, thought his wife and her anger mounted.

In the village Sichkar stopped at the houses of all his relations without missing one, near or distant. He would carry in a bottle, drink with them, come out and proceed further. He seemed to be showing off. The whole village could see how Ivan Sichkar took leave of his relations before going back to prison.

22

The September sun sank gradually behind vaporous clouds and drew down after it a dense layer looking like unbleached linen. In the bushes at the edge of the woods a machine-gun snarled and rattled angrily, echoing back from the trees in a thin moan like that of a frightened woman.

Dokia stopped by the stile, listening to the firing.

That must be another of those bands, she thought. Can they have attacked our committee? She sighed, thinking not so much of the band as of Timofi. He had left again before dawn to continue dividing up the estate and kulak land and was not yet back. Her heart was heavy; whatever misfortunes came, her first alarm was always for her husband, for her relations—although now she knew none to whom she could pray and plead that they might be protected from disaster.

Just think of it—how many years had passed since she had received the first clumsy caresses from silent, stern Timofi! They already had a son, almost a man, yet she still loved him like a girl and missed him like a girl when he was absent, although never by word or sign did she let other people guess it. . . . When Dmitro was born, when the world of motherhood opened before her with its troubles and joys, a fresh current flowed into her love, and Timofi was no longer only husband, but father too—perhaps because her own father died at about this time. Dokia's joy was almost painful when she met her husband coming home from work at dusk, pressed herself to him, laid her head on his breast and drew in the scents of the wide steppe or the fragrant forest still clinging to the folds of his clothing.

"Well, sweetheart," was all he would say, and smile down at her with melancholy dark eyes, laying a great hand on her head as though she were a child.

"I've missed you, Timofi—missed you like as if you were at that German war again."

"Have you?" He looked at her gently and, as he so often did, sank into his thoughts, his own cares.

The sun peeped out of a narrow gap between the clouds, casting the shadow-pattern of an apple-tree at the woman's feet. The sound of horses' hooves came from the distance, closer and closer, then four riders appeared on smooth, handsome horses. Three were in Budyonny caps and the fourth, evidently the commander, wore a Kuban hat. They had carbines slung over their shoulders and red stripes down their dark-blue riding breeches. A machine-gun *tachanka* driven at a furious gallop overtook the riders and the tall, wild-haired Cossack standing up to drive with a swagger shouted to the others over his shoulder as he raced past. The horsemen laughed, called something after him about Galchevsky's

band and then their young voices began singing in harmony a song about the Bo-gun Regiment.

Going after bandits, and laughing and singing as if death were just a joke, thought the woman wonderingly. And with misted eyes she watched them ride away. Now they were turning the bend, disappearing—perhaps for ever. Their song had faded into silence, but Dokia's heart ached for these sons of other women as though they were her own.

She did not even hear a cart drive up to the gate, or see her tall, aquiline-nosed Timofi enter the yard.

"Dokia!" the voice came to her as though from beneath the earth. She roused herself and hurried to meet him, her eyes taking in her husband's glowing face, Miroshnichenko beside the horses, and the plough, and the fishing tackle in the cart.

"Going away somewhere again, Timofi? Good evening, Svirid Yakovlevich, come inside," she said, with a slight bow of greeting.

"Good health to all." Miroshnichenko nodded from behind the fence. "No time to sit down, better get your husband off as quick as you can. In the morning we start ploughing our new land."

"Kulak land?" cried Dokia. She sounded as surprised as though she knew nothing, as though she had not been waiting for this land, dreaming of it, asleep and awake.

"Not kulak land, our own," the chairman laughed.

"Our own?" she said, in real bewilderment now. "Our dessiatine's sowed."

"Now the other's ours too. Used to be kulak land, now it's ours."

"So it's the kulak land?" Dokia asked again, as though wanting yet more words to affirm her joy.

"Not kulak land any more, I'm telling you—our own!" Broad-faced, sinewy Miroshnichenko rocked with mirth. "You just can't get used to the idea that it's ours now."

"Ours, ours!" she breathed. She stood motionless in the middle of the yard, feeling a great lightness and yet hardly daring to believe.

Thoughts flooded her mind; her eyes saw nothing of the autumn sky, the little yard or the black, sagging fence pecked here and there by bullets. In her mind she saw fields, bright emerald in the early morning light, against a background of golden sky. They had no more tangles of rusty barbed wire, no trenches, even the fresh Red Army graves were washed away in waves of spring grain, of stubby-headed wheat, with ribbons of poppies burning as the sun rose over the earth. And it was no longer bullets but a flying quail that cut through the ears, happy at the sight of its fledglings tumbling on the warm soil or rising on youthful wings. And she, Dokia, walked beside Timofi, walked along the path to their fields. The softly whispering corn ears caressed her shoulders and the fragrant dew bathed her feet.

Would all this really come to be?

She started as her meagre youth rose before her like a ragged black cloud.

The arid steppeland.

The landlord's wheat.



"Mother, mother, sit down and rest a moment."

"In a little while, daughter."

The mother looked about her as though to take in the whole heavens with her pale, sad eyes, straightened up, wiped the sweat from her forehead, groaned, dropped her sickle and collapsed beside it. It cut her hand, but the blood did not spurt out, just a few drops seeped from her numbed hand. And drops of sweat appeared over her dry, dusty lips.

"Life has flown away like a grey dove." Another reaper, dried up by the sun and field labour, stooped like a humped shadow over her mother.

"An easy death, at work," said one of the labourers, almost enviously.

"Working for others, neither life nor death is easy." Those words, spoken by one of the people clustered round, seemed to echo from the depths of centuries.

They seemed to echo again, to form part of the sad rustle of autumn when her mother's coffin swayed past her eyes, when it floated to its place among other graves like a boat on humping waves. Red guelder roses wet with dew blared over the grave like a bright kerchief. And year after year, the dew dropped from them like slow tears over the half-forgotten peasant woman who had been born in want, given birth to a daughter in torment and died in bitterness on rough alien stubble. There, under the bush, the grass grew more thickly—and that was all. Twice during the summer, the deaf watchman with the shaggy grey brows

Reapers, their faces hollow, their lips cracking till they bleed. Infants gasping in the heat. Mothers with no milk in their dry breasts, only tears in their eyes.

Her own mother, on the third day after giving birth, had been reaping the brittle, over-ripe wheat, never pausing to straighten her back. Gritting her teeth with pain, biting dry lips she reaped, almost falling in exhaustion.

mowed the grass, and the wind sang through the low haycocks, melancholy songs of hundreds of tillers of the soil, different and yet alike.

Dokia drove away the unhappy vision and followed her husband indoors.

"Get me something to take to the fields," said Timofi, with an affectionate look at her. "Well, my dear," he went on, "we've got three more dessiatines of land. How's that?"

"Three dessiatines?" Dokia went up to her husband, hardly daring to believe it. "And for always? Or maybe just for a year or two?" she went on doubtfully.

"For always. Now the land is ours." Timofi paced with firm steps up and down the room. "Get something ready for tomorrow evening, folks'll be coming to see us, we've got to celebrate our good fortune. Maybe good fortune has come to sit down at our table at last."

Dokia nodded, then smiled at her thoughts, and fine lines spread like rays of mirth round her brown eyes.

"If only they'd given us just half a dessiatine more, Timofi, that would have made five altogether, a round figure."

"Aye, you've made no mistake there," laughed Timofi.

Dokia's joy was too great for words. She pressed close to her husband, feeling happy tears pricking her eyes.

She remembered that both her father and Timofi, going out for the first spring ploughing, always put on their Easter shirts. And this ploughing—did it matter less? Dokia ran over to the chest, raised the heavy lid, took out a clean shirt.

"Here, Timofi, put this on—for the ploughing."

He looked from his wife to the shirt, gave a surprised grunt but began obediently to change—Dokia knew better than he all the customs and beliefs connected with the soil, and while one might not put faith in them, it was wiser not to flout them. The fresh linen felt pleasantly cool to his skin. This shirt was woven of the finest thread which only Dokia knew how to spin. It was not without reason that folks said her fingers could turn plain tow into silver thread.

"Well, time to be going. Dokia—" He wanted to say something especially tender but could find no words. He put his arm round her and—amazing!—kissed her black braid. Then he turned and went out.

"Timofi—" moved and troubled, she overtook him in the entry. "I wish you wouldn't go at night. Galchevsky's band stops at nothing."

She spoke as though her husband did not know himself what was going on.

"Just gossip. If you're afraid of wolves, stay out of the forest. The kulaks won't keep them going much longer. Yes, and Svirid Yakovlevich has brought his rifle along, too. So keep your chin up. . . . Now, that's what I don't like, you're always worrying. Well, I suppose you can't help it—a woman." Strong and unhurried, he went with confident steps to the gate.

Her husband's firm words calmed Dokia. As long as Timofi walked the earth everything would be well, she had nothing to fear. She followed him out with his heavy well-worn coat, for the old wound in his leg might trouble him in

the field at night and it was best kept warm. Then she stood watching him drive down the highroad, the road along which the Red Army riders had passed.

How could she guess that this was the last time she would see her husband alive?

The cart climbed a rise. For another moment she saw Timofi's head, then it disappeared beyond the trees that overhung the road like dark clouds.

"What are you thinking about so hard?" Miroshnichenko's energetic face with the big blue eyes was smiling. "Still about the land?"

"Uhuh," Timofi grunted.

"We've stirred up a wasps' nest all right. The kulak tribe are howling. If they had their way they'd have more than one of us getting land enough for burial."

"Yes," said Timofi. "The landlords've run away, but there's the seeds of more in the kulak farms, and roots too. They won't let go of their fields so easily. They're savage as tigers. We'll have trouble with them yet, and plenty. Varchuk and Denisenko—they're not the kind to give anything away. I saw how they glared. Varchuk's face—it was twisted as though he was being buried alive." Timofi sweated with the effort of such a long speech.

"Nothing'll help them. What's past won't come back however they howl. But to hell with them, a nest of snakes. Better talk of something pleasanter."

That talk had to be postponed, however. There was a rattle of hooves from behind, then a light britchka raced past trailing a whirling column of dust. The well-fed horses seemed to fly rather than gallop. The driver, a curved black figure, leaned forward with raised elbows as though about to leap on to the horses. He turned and black eyes blazed with seething rage.

"Safron Varchuk," Timofi muttered.

"Phew! What's brought him out at night? Taking a look at the land he's lost?" Miroshnichenko rose a little in his surprise.

"Might be off to some of those bandits. They say he was thick as thieves with Shepel, and Galchevsky is Shepel's right hand."

The dust raised by the britchka slowly settled while fallen leaves fluttered like fledglings fallen from the nest.

A lonely figure could be seen moving along the road under the trees that swayed their crowns beneath a lowering grey sky.

"Look, isn't that your Dmitro?"

The slender, flaxen-headed youth came quickly closer with his light, springy walk. His thick shining hair fell over his eyebrows.

"Good evening," he greeted Miroshnichenko. "Father, where are you going?" Then his eyes sparkled as he guessed. "To plough up the kulak land?"

"Our land, Dmitro. There's no more kulak land now. It's all ours." Timofi did not even notice that he was repeating Miroshnichenko's words.

"Ours! I can't believe it," the youth smiled; he caught the edge of the cart

and jumped up lightly to sit on it, legs dangling, heels drumming against the spokes of the wheel. Every movement was filled with strength and energy, and no sunburn could hide the healthy glow of his cheeks.

"Can't believe it, eh?" growled Miroshnichenko. "It's you, lad, who won't have to wear yourself out working other men's land for a few coppers now. You'll work on your own fields. Just think it over—what was the first decree of the Soviet government? About the land. I read a novel not long ago when I was in hospital, *Lost Powers* it was called. A weary book, all about village life. 'A sea of simple ignorance,' that's what it called the tormented, plundered labourers. And it was true—what difference was there between the muzhik and an ox? The ox paced in front of the plough and the muzhik behind it, working himself to death on someone else's land. But the Revolution changed us from a sea of simple ignorance into human beings. Without that, none of us would have known what life was, let alone this land."

"Comrade Savchenko told us that at the meeting when he explained all about the alliance of workers and peasants," said Dmitro shyly.

Miroshnichenko looked at him with a smile.

"You give heed to speeches like that, lad. That's what the Party wants, and the Party wants it because the people want it. You've got to understand what it's all about, and most important of all, be one of the new folks yourself, a soldier of the Revolution. That's your road, Dmitro. And if you leave it you'll fall into a backwater. We hold our happiness in our own two hands. The great thing is not to let it slip through our fingers like chaff, not to become a slave of the soil, a narrow grasping man who sees nothing beyond it and drives himself and his children for no good reason. Get me?"

"Yes, Svirid Yakovlevich," Dmitro answered, raising his eyes to Miroshnichenko's. "And where's our new land?" he asked, turning to his father.

"By the Bug," Miroshnichenko answered for Timofi. "It's good land."

"And is yours nearby?"

"Right alongside. Are you pleased?"

A radiant smile like a child's made the youth's face still more pleasant to look at. "I'll never forget today as long as I live!" he cried.

"You're right there! These are days when our whole life's turning to the sun." Miroshnichenko moved closer to Dmitro, then touched his leg. "What d'you think you're doing? Trying to get your leg caught in the spokes?"

"No fear!"

"Stop playing the fool. Pull your legs in."

"I'm not playing the fool. Even when I'm whittling or planing something at the bench, I can always feel when the last shaving's off. Then I measure it with the calipers and it's right to a hair. And this is the same. . . . Take me with you to the field."

"We'll manage without you," said Timofi. "You've only just finished work, haven't even eaten."

"What's that matter?—A day like this? . . . Listen, they're singing in the fields. Something to sing about! Eh, if only we'd got more livestock,"

said Miroshnichenko dreamily. "If we could give a horse to every poor peasant. . . . Because many a man will have to be going cap in hand to the kulaks for the loan of one, and share his crop for it. . . . How's your carpentering going, Dmitro?"

"All right," said the youth with reserve.

"I know, I know you're doing well. Old Gorenko's always praising you."

Embarrassed, Dmitro jumped down from the cart and turned unhurriedly towards the village.

"A grand lad," said Svirid Miroshnichenko. "Only he's as dour and silent as his father. Let himself go a bit today, though—in honour of the occasion."

"What's it matter? He won't have to make speeches," Timofi shrugged. "Shout at a horse, that's enough. And the land—he can farm it as well as any man. The fields need workers, not talkers."

"H'm. So that's your idea, eh?" Miroshnichenko snorted in mingled annoyance and laughter. "So you think all he needs is to shout at a horse? Queer ideas you get, Timofi. No, we've not had a revolution just so our children should go on the same old way. Not for that!"

That's a wise word—it wasn't for that we had a revolution, thought Timofi, turning it over peasant fashion in a mind accustomed to think and weigh before coming to conclusions. . . . He's got a brain, that he has. Where does he get it all from?

23

Fields rose in flickering glimpses, rose and drifted back only to rise again. Safron Varchuk's eye picked out among the many-coloured patches the landmarks and configurations of his own. All these had now concentrated for him into the figure 30. That figure pursued him like a nightmare, drew the soul from him. The very fields seemed to curve and circle before him in those two figures. Thirty dessiatines, he thought bitterly, thirty dessiatines they're taking! The thought was like a hand that gripped him agonisingly.

The britchka raced past the Mikhailov farmstead and turned into Lityn Woods. Safron sighed with relief, crossed himself, looked about him and sighed again. He kept having an uneasy apprehension that the Kombed men had guessed where he was going and set out in pursuit.

With keen, alert eyes, he peered into the forest on either side of the road, hoping to come across one of the bandits' patrols. But there was nobody to be seen.

The exhausted horses slowed from a gallop to a trot, and greenish foam from the bits spattered the grey sand, mingling with the acorn cups that strewed it.

Safron jumped off the britchka and rubbed down the horses with a handful of soft oat straw. Then he listened.

Silence. He could even hear a fat acorn like a cartridge fall from branch to branch, strike the grass, rebound like a grasshopper and fall again to settle comfortably on the ground.

Could they have left? Varchuk shivered. Impossible! Maybe they've moved to another village? I'll find them. I'll find them if I have to go to the end of the world. I'll ask Galchevsky, I'll beg him to settle with all those Kombed bastards. Take thirty dessiatines, will you? May they choke you!

The veins on his temples swelled, his head rang, it seemed as though it would burst.

"Get on, ye devils!" he shouted and venting his fury on the horses swung a vicious whip that left two dark lines down their backs.

The blacks moved wearily along the road. And the sun, heavy with evening, seemed to be following the britchka through the trees.

Dew was falling when Safron entered the quiet village. He looked about him and the knot of lines on his forehead smoothed. Two bandits stood on the small bridge eyeing the newcomer from under tall fur hats worn at a rakish angle. Unhobbled horses grazed nearby.

"Good evening, lads. Is the batko home?" asked Varchuk in a deliberately brisk, authoritative voice. He knew that was the only way—if a man seemed quiet and timid they'd take his horses without thinking twice.

"And who might you be?" A tall, clumsy fellow came up to Varchuk, playing suggestively with a sawn-off gun.

"Batko Galchevsky's cousin," Varchuk lied confidently. "I've brought important news about the positions of Baglyuk's First Cavalry Brigade, part of the Second Red Cossacks."

"Aha!" drawled the bandit significantly, and now his narrow eyes held a look of respect. "Go to headquarters, they're waiting."

"Where's headquarters now? Same place—the priest's house?"

"Where else?" The patrol was in no way surprised to find Varchuk so well-informed. "Where'll you find better food, aye, or a better—bed!" He gave the last word especial significance, then burst out laughing.

Beside the bridge a half-clad bandit sprawled by the nettles under a sagging fence, snoring loudly enough to be heard down the whole street. Near his head lay an empty bottle and a tall hat with the hetman's trefoil and a dirty yellow brush. A necklace and a red kerchief trailed out of his torn pocket like a trickle of blood.

Too busy plundering and drinking to see what's happening to us, damn 'em, thought Safron, examining the prone bandit with angry eyes.

At the door of the priest's house he was stopped by a sentry, armed to the teeth.

"The batko's not at home, he's away on a trip." The bandit examined the unexpected visitor under his brows with sharp, unfriendly eyes.

"Not here?" Varchuk thought a moment. "Then I'll speak to his chief of staff, Dobrovolsky."

"He's busy."

"All right, I can wait."

"Wait if you like. But get back to that end of the street. Civilians not allowed here. Dis-cip-line!"

"Discipline! Swill yourselves stupid and vomit over all the roadside weeds!"

"You mind your tongue! Or I'll have your guts out before you know it!" The sentry snatched his gun from his shoulder.

"Go home and frighten your old woman, I knew your sort and worse before you were whelped. . . . The batko'll twist your neck like a chicken's if you bother me!"

At this moment a gay voice called out, "Ho-ho-ho, Safron Andreyevich! What wind's brought you here?"

The sentry wilted and retreated to the back of the porch.

"Omelyan? Omelyan Krupyak?" cried Varchuk, amazed and delighted, and with the brightest hopes grasped the bandit's dry, bony hand.

It was a somewhat short agile man in red corduroy trousers who stood before Safron. His sharp white teeth flashed in a smile, but his close-set, slightly squinting eyes held a changing, secretive spark.

"Good evening, Safron Andreyevich. So you've come to us? For good, maybe? An excellent idea, excellent! Want to fight the commune, is that it? Can't just sit still at home? Had enough of it? Decided to join us?" His words poured out like a mountain stream.

"I'd be glad to, but at my years—"

"Oh years, years, what have you done to me!" Krupyak struck a theatrical pose, then laughed. "Then you've brought news for the batko?"

"Something of that sort," Varchuk answered evasively. "But they say he's not here?"

"No. Gone to Maidan Trepovsky. He was at school there once. And he's got a wench somewhere near Zgar, too. He's a dad to more than one girl." Krupyak laughed heartily at his own joke.

"A fine time to be fooling with wenches," snorted Safron. "If you don't help, then don't expect anything from us either. They want to strip us bare as a barked tree."

"Been cutting off your land?" Krupyak said, and his face expressed sympathy.

"Just that," Varchuk groaned, "They could as well cut me in two and leave me on the road. All the work I've put into getting that land! And as soon as I reach a life of plenty, they take all my property and give it to some rag-tag-and-bobtail. If they'd cut out my heart it would have been easier. But it's my land they take, my land!"

"But not for long," said the bandit confidently. "There's big reinforcements coming from the west. They say Pilsudski's not against a fat morsel. And tomorrow or the next day ours'll drive from over the Dnestr and the Bug. Of course, that's just a bait for a real fight. And then there'll be a storm that'll sweep the Bolsheviks away like dust."

"God grant it, God grant it." Safron raised his hand in a habitual gesture to cross himself, but catching the other man's mocking eyes he dropped it again and said pleadingly, "Help me, Omelyan, I'll be grateful to the end of my days. . . . I can't go home like this, with nothing settled, I'm torn to bits inside. Why not finish off all that Kombed gang of ours with one blow? They're worse than the soldiers, they know everything; there's not a thing you can hide from them, they'll find it if it's under the earth. This is the best time—the troops are away from the village, gone for a round-up somewhere, there's only the wagon-drivers left."

Krupyak looked at Safron in amazement and his thin fingers played with the plaited yellow strap of his revolver. He had never seen this wily muzhik so miserably helpless. The purple half-moons under his eyes were sunken and the long nose on his wedge-shaped face seemed to droop to his very mouth.

"Only the drivers, you say?" Krupyak turned serious and thoughtful.

"Not another soul!" Varchuk raised his eyes in desperate hope. "The Kombed chairman, the worst of them all, has gone out to plough at night. We can settle him without any fuss. . . . Shall we tell Dobrovolsky?"

"Eh, no," the bandit frowned, and Safron stood in frozen alarm. Lowering his voice, Krupyak explained, "Somehow, I don't quite trust him lately. I'm afraid he may slink off to the Reds one of these days. Do some smart trick. And then there's this amnesty. . . . No, you can't trust him."

Probably making it all up, to be chief of staff himself, thought Varchuk, who knew Omelyan's ambitious nature. But—what if it's true? He glanced apprehensively at the window of the priest's house—had Dobrovolsky seen him? Safron's chin shook nervously.

"Scared?" Omelyan jeered with an unpleasant laugh. "Keep your pants on, he's busy—with the bottle. And while he's at it, we'll raid that village of yours. They're devils, those lads of mine. Will they find something worth while?"

"What d'you think? Some of those Kombed have got fine horses now."

"Horses—we've plenty of our own! Took them from a stud farm! Gallop so the wind whistles," Krupyak bragged. He was never still for a moment, eternally fidgeting about. "Well, let's go, no time to waste." His squinting eyes hardened.

"That's the way," cried Varchuk, and untroubled by Omelyan's mockery he crossed himself fervently and spat over his shoulder. The anguish of his heart was somewhat allayed, he believed his wish was to be realized.

He could clearly picture a dead Miroshnichenko floating in the green water of the Bug, he saw the committee members shot or sabred, their cottages burning. And all his land lay before him again—his, undivided, all his five strips like five fingers on a hand. Instead of the way it was now—all sliced up.

With an agile leap Krupyak was in the britchka.

"Drive to the pond, that's where those devils of mine are!"

Intoxicated with triumph and a flow of furious strength, Varchuk sent the horses through the village at such a pace that trees and houses seemed to leap awkwardly past.

His land was coming back to him again, it was close, it seemed to emerge, to float and spread out before the britchka.

Krupyak dissipated his sweet, agitating vision.

"By the way, did anybody see you leave?"

"Can you keep anything secret in a village?"

"And what if they get after you when our raid's over—what'll you say? Got something ready?"

"I'll say I went to the doctor. I've got a girl sick, a girl I adopted, Marta. She's got malaria, real bad, worn her down to a shadow."

"And will you look in at the doctor's?"

"Of course. I'm taking him a bit of pork fat. Everything'll be water-tight."

"Yes, I know you've got your head screwed on." Krupyak displayed a double row of sparkling white teeth, then turned serious again. "The doctor's a good idea, but all the same, better not go back to the village after our raid."

"Where'll I spend the night?"

Krupyak thought a moment, then raised his hand to his cocked hat.

"You've good horses, go to Vinnitsa, and straight to the gubernia committee."

"But what on earth for?" Varchuk wondered. "Up to now I haven't had anything to do with such big Soviet officials, thank God."

"Go to the land department and find Yarem Gurkalo, he's a friend of mine. Take him a greeting from me and a bundle, for that Bolshevik ration won't fill anyone's belly. And ask Yarem to restore your land to you, as a man with a model farm."

"But, Omelyan, does the law allow that?" cried Safron in amazed delight.

"The Bolsheviks don't touch efficient farmers with model farms. And you've had an award, haven't you?"

"A silver medal, I've taken care of it. Thank you, thank you for advising me. Eh, what a head you've got, Omelyan! Better than a minister's!"

Omelyan only sighed. He too had a high opinion of his own capabilities, but luck had been against him, even under Petlyura he had never risen to be an important batko—one time it was wounds, another time a tongue too sharp—every kind of ill chance had kept him in the shade when snot-noses of twenty were rising to be ambassadors or ministers. True, Petlyura had enough of these ministers to supply the whole of Europe and still have some left over, but all the same it was an honour—at least they were in the papers.

In the whirlpool of war Krupyak had been among all kinds of people, he had known the hardships of fighting and the shame of capture, he had seen the tsar and Rasputin, he had met Petlyura and Vyshvanniy, he had lived in the mansion of a German margrave, but never yet had he met a man satisfied with his life. And he himself was not satisfied either.

In a big yard without a gate Varchuk reined in his horses, and in the same instant he was deafened by a woman's lamentations, the screaming of children and the angry shouts of a squat, broad-shouldered bandit.

"I won't give it you, I won't let you have it, I wore my fingers to the bone to spin and weave it! The children have nothing to wear!" A tall gaunt woman in

unbleached blouse and skirt was clinging frantically to a piece of homespun which the furious bandit was trying to drag away.

"Let go, you bitch!"

"I won't, not if you kill me! Children—go and fetch folks! Help, help!"

"I'll give ye call the folks! I'll help ye!" The bandit gave a tug at the material which fell and rolled, a gay blue strip, along the green grass.

The woman fell prone on it, and the flaxen-headed, crying children clustered round her.

The bandit circled round them, sideways, like a raven, then suddenly straightened.

"Ugh—you mangy bitch!"

His bared sabre flashed in a streak through the air and the woman, covering her eyes in terror, huddled to the ground.

But the bandit did not look at her. With a feline spring he made for a small, bony cow with a lean udder and moist sad eyes standing by the shed. The woman screamed, a dreadful scream, and wringing her hands, rushed to intercept him. But it was too late. There was the thin whistle of steel, and blood spurted up from the cow's neck, then poured out on the grass. The cow thrust its horns into the ground, swayed, and collapsed awkwardly on to its side.

"There you are, ye witch from the Black Mountain!" The bandit looked sideways at the woman, and wiped his sabre on the grass.

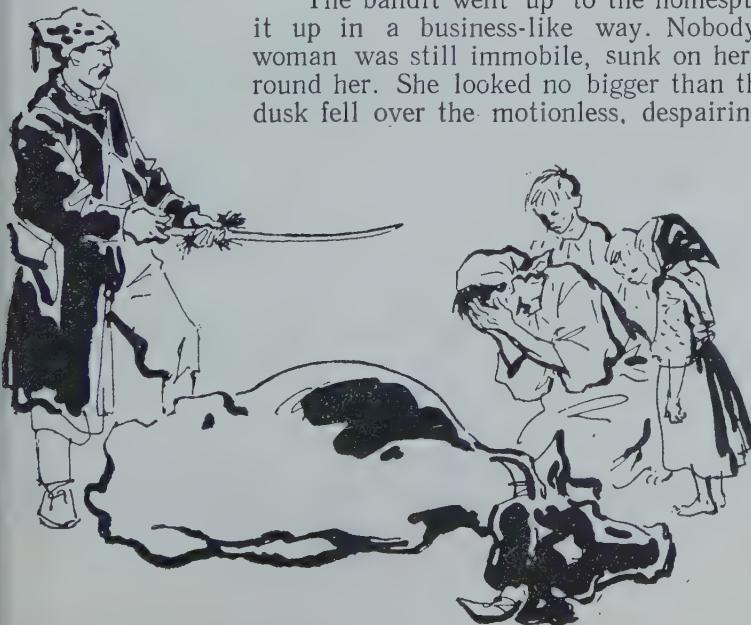
The woman clutched her head with a groan and sank to her knees.

"A good, clean stroke," Krupyak observed. "Had plenty of practice on men."

"Who was that?"

"One of ours, of course. Used to be an officer under Skoropadsky. But he drank, and lost his men and his rank too."

The bandit went up to the homespun and began rolling it up in a business-like way. Nobody hindered him, the woman was still immobile, sunk on her knees, her children round her. She looked no bigger than they as the September dusk fell over the motionless, despairing figure.



Timofi Goritsvit and Svirid Miroshnichenko set their nets a little way from the shoal where ripples of golden sand shone through the water.

The waves sighed against the heavy flat-bottomed boat. The golden veins stirred on the water by the oars became fainter and finer as evening settled over the banks. In the last glow of light the men's faces had the softness of youth.

They tied up the boat and climbed a footpath to the fields.

A horseman in a Budyonnny cap galloped up a granite spur that jutted out over the Bug, reined in his horse so that it reared and stood motionless on the sheer dropping down to the water, that sparkled in the sun's last rays.

"Good evening, folks," he said in Byelorussian. "Come out to your land?"

Flaxen curls fluttered on his brow and lively young eyes of a flashing blue took in the men and the wide expanse.

"Yes—our land," Timofi answered, squinting up at the youth, and his heart turned over with the words as though realizing for the first time their full meaning.

What's happening to me, he thought, listening to his own voice, his eyes fixed on the gay, confident face of the young Red Armyman.

Suddenly comprehension came to him. The very word "land" now had a different ring. His former dessiatine wedged in between kulak fields, its warm clods spilling over on to them like honeycomb from a wooden frame, was not to be named in the same breath with his present allocation. Now his land would no longer be an oppressed orphan, a day labourer; like the sun it had emerged from the mists and lay fair before his eyes. And that young armyman—he too, evidently, was glad Timofi had been given land, and rejoiced like Timofi to know that somewhere in Byelorussia his own Kombed, following Lenin's law, was allotting land to the poor peasants in just the same way.

"Have you been given land at home, too?" asked Timofi coming closer.

"Mother wrote we've got four dessiatines. Just by the river."

"By the river? Like ours?" said Goritsvit, pleased by the coincidence.

"She wrote me, 'Though I'm old, now I want to live,' that's what she wrote," and the man laughed with a flash of white teeth.

"Is it good land, your way?"

"Grows potatoes. . . . Well, so she said, she wants to live. We're free now, we can breathe."

"That's true. And old folks can feel the truth. . . . Is it black soil?"

"Sand and bogland."

"That's bad. You won't grow wheat, then." Goritsvit actually sighed. "You mix peat with that sand, peat and plenty of it. It's got power in it, even though it's but old grass."

"Aye, I can do that now, they've given us a horse. You can't carry that stuff on your back."

"That's true," Timofi agreed. "Well, you'll soon be going home."

"When we've finished off those bastards of bandits. And that means soon, I s'pose."

He rose lightly in his stirrups, carefully examined the country-side once more, and continued on his way, while his plaintive song floated over the fields.

*Oh streamlet, little streamlet,
Why is your water low,
Why is your water low
With stones to stop its flow?*

"With stones to stop its flow," Timofi mused. Pulling the horse from a lonely patch of over-ripe millet, he went to the steep drop and gazed across the river.

On the far side stretched a broad green expanse cut by a pattern of streams and sparkling little lakes. The village of Ivchanka—wretched-looking, exposed to every wind—stood out against the crimson sunset. For untold ages its people had toiled on the landlord Kolchak's boundless fields. War and want had laid grim hands on the village, the half-ruined huts were sinking into the ground, the pale ribs of their rafters showed through rotting roofs—a house seemed to be dying before your eyes, fading like the last moonbeam in that end window. Here and there, however, there was a lighter patch of fresh timber; the landlord's woods were evidently being drawn upon to make labourers' homes.

"Giving your eyes a feast?" said Miroshnichenko, as though sensing Timofi's thought. "A village for an artist's hand, as Shevchenko wrote."

"An artist's been at work on those hovels all right—they're worse than ours."

"That they are," sighed Miroshnichenko. "But they'll get on to their feet sooner than we shall, you see if they don't."

"Why d'you think so?"

"Because they're all of one mind, they stick together. That village has a grand history. Who were the first to smash their landlord in 1905? The Ivchanka folks. And where do most of our partisans come from now? Ivchanka again. When they really get down to work—they'll make the sparks fly! I shan't forget the 9th of November 1917 in a hurry. We'd only just heard about the Revolution. Well, some Bolsheviks came to Ivchanka in the evening. The folks crowded into the square till it was near bursting. And all of them old folks and children. Just here and there some man who'd been wounded at the front and come home on leave, or disabled, maybe. But their resolution said, 'Although only grandfathers, women and cripples are here, the enemies of the Revolution shall not tread our soil. We shall take scythes, pitchforks and brooms and sweep them from the earth. Till the last drop of blood is shed we shall stand for the Soviets of workers', peasants' and soldiers' deputies.' And they do stand—firm! Eh, Timofi, what folks those are! Last year when we were fighting Petlyura...."

But Miroshnichenko was not to finish the story. Ivan Bondar emerged heavily from the bushes along the bank.

"Svirid, you're wanted," he said without waiting for any greeting. "Someone's come from town. You're needed at once."

"You didn't hear what it's about, did you?" asked Miroshnichenko picking up his rifle.

"No, they didn't say. Seems like there's some more bandits turned up round about our way. No rest or peace from them. If it isn't Shepel it's Galchevsky, if it isn't Galchevsky it's another of the devil's brood. How much longer are we going to be plagued with them?"

Timofi's melancholy eyes narrowed and he smiled gently, dreamily.

". . . till we finish off those bastards of bandits," he repeated the Byelorussian's words.

Miroshnichenko laughed and clapped Goritsvit on the back.

"That's right enough! . . . Who's come?" he said, turning to Bondar again.

"Antanas Donelaitis. So it must be something serious."

"Antanas? Yes, he doesn't come for nothing."

"That's what I say."

Antanas Donelaitis was at the head of the district land department. He had escaped from Lithuania and made his way to Petrograd with other Communists when the Lithuanian Soviet Republic was crushed by the Entente and the Kaiser's troops. Though badly wounded, he refused to hear of going to hospital, so he was sent to the south in charge of a column of Baltic seamen seeking food supplies. Again he was wounded, then came the Chernigov forests, battles against Petlyura's men, a raid with Shchors right to Vinnitsa and another wound.

He was on his back quite a long time—badly healed wounds opened again, injured bones ached. But as soon as he got a little strength back he hobbled with his stick to the district Party committee. There he pushed the stick behind a tall fence and made his way to the secretary, trying not to limp. But nothing came of his hopes.

"We're not sending you against the bandits. You're still a sick man."

"What am I supposed to do, then—welfare work?" he asked acidly. But his irony missed fire, his question was answered with all seriousness. "Well, that might be quite a good idea."

All his arguments and pleas, his anger and even tricks were in vain. They wouldn't send him, and that was the end of it. At last he got himself appointed head of the land department.

At that time the remnants of Petlyura's and Shepel's men were roaming the country-side, and Antanas spent day after day on horseback. His short, alert figure was a familiar sight all along the Bug and people liked his fiery, merry speeches.

Nobody ever guessed how homesick the young Communist was for his own Lithuania where he had left his parents and sweetheart, where he had first shed his blood. Superintending the division of land somewhere by the Bug, he dreamed of the day when he would do the same by the Niemen.

"Where did you get that?" asked Miroshnichenko, suddenly noticing that Bondar had a sawed-off gun.

"Red Armymen conked a bandit on the edge of the woods. I begged it off them."

"Aren't you afraid to carry it without a permit?"

"There's no permit needed to defend our Soviet power," Bondar answered firmly and seriously. "But we'd better be going."

"Good-bye, Timofi. I'll try to be back by dawn. If I'm held up I'll send Dmitro with a message. A pity—I was looking forward to my first ploughing on my own new land." Regret softened the firm lines of his resolute face. "Well, come on, Ivan."

Shoulder to shoulder the two men set off, looking like brothers, both equally sturdy and broad-shouldered.

The path led along the black, rain-swollen stubble right to the village. They took a short cut through the vegetable plots to the school where they at once saw Antanas on a restless young stallion that now and then bared angry teeth. Antanas was talking with animation to members of the Kombed and some Red Armymen who had placed a German three-inch gun in the middle of the street.

"Hullo, Miroshnichenko! Congratulations!" Donelaitis jumped down from his horse and limped up to Miroshnichenko. "You're a grand inventor," he went on with a gesture towards the gun.

"Will it work?" Miroshnichenko looked hopefully into the Lithuanian's green eyes.

"It certainly will. I've examined the whole thing, to the last screw." Done-laitis' pale thin face with its sprinkling of freckles was lighted up by a smile as broad and open as a child's.

"That's grand!" Miroshnichenko sighed with relief. "It's a gun, after all."

"A gun—what's that? The main thing's—brains! The brains of a working man are worth more than any gun."

When the Germans retreated, they had abandoned this weapon, damaged, on the road. Miroshnichenko had made up his mind to use it against the bandits. In the wheelwright's shop it had been put on a wooden carriage, then the blacksmith had worked for a long time on the broken breech mechanism which lacked a vital part. Miroshnichenko had him rivet a long iron shaft to the breech. The idea was simple—a blow on the shaft explodes the detonator and the shell flies at the target.

His invention filled him with joy and alarm. What if it wouldn't work?

But now Donelaitis said it would.

By dusk the committee members and armymen were in a forest glade. Antanas had learned that the remnants of Salenko's band had left the Barsk Woods to join up with Galchevsky, and hurried to cut them off. When they emerged into the fields they were met by the damp fragrance of freshly turned-up soil.

"Ours have been ploughing today," Miroshnichenko told Donelaitis, trying to hide his excitement—he was still thinking of the gun.

The darkness thickened and clouds drew together on the horizon, extinguish-

ing the last reddish glow. Suddenly the lower fringe of these clouds stirred, tore away and came flying towards the village.

"Get ready!" Antanas shouted to the gunners.

The horses described a circle and the blunt muzzle faced west, towards the ominous, lowering gloom. The other men spread out on the ploughland.

Bandits came galloping from under the clouds. There was a rising thunder of hoofs along the road and two wings of dust rose into the air.

Miroshnichenko stood by the gun. He swung his whole body back, then struck. A long sheet of flame roared from the muzzle. The ground shuddered. A ragged column of earth laced with fire rose before the bandits, swelled out and then gradually dissipated.

"That's the stuff to give 'em!" shouted Antanas, rushing to the gun.

A fine spiral of smoke rose from the breech, but was strangled by a new shell.

"That's the stuff!" Miroshnichenko struck again, and again the ground shuddered.

The bandits leaped from their horses like a flock of crows alighting on the field, but a geyser of soil rose over them and small figures flew from it in all directions. Then flashes sparked here and there over the ground. The sawed-off guns made a bigger flash that looked more dangerous than the tiny ones from rifles, but actually the reverse was the case. Ivan Bondar knew that well and aimed carefully at the small marks, his great body pressed closely to the soil.

He had given his own sawed-off gun to Stepan Kushnir, who lay in a neighbouring furrow and cursed heartily after every shot, for the gun had a tremendous kick that nearly lifted him up.

"Played a fine trick on me, you did," growled Kushnir at last.

"I don't deny it," Bondar agreed. "But you see yourself it's all for a good cause."

"I see that all right. Think I'd stand this brute if I didn't? There'll be fewer of those swine, at least."

Bondar said nothing. A long, clumsy figure was rising quite close. The bandit shouted, but his wild, high yell changed suddenly to a hoarse gurgle.

"Stuff your mouth with our earth," grunted Ivan as he reloaded.

"One kontra the less."

"If we could shut them all up with lead in one night!"

"We'll shut them up. But not in a night. Everything in its own good time, as Miroshnichenko says. Ugh, what a kick this brute has. My shoulder's black and blue," and Kushnir grimaced. "Looks as though they've crawled off. . . . Ivan Timofeyevich—aren't you frightened—at all?"

"Haven't heard my teeth chattering yet."

"I am scared, a bit," Kushnir confessed and his voice sank to a whisper. "Not just for my skin, don't think that. It's got tough long ago. I never thought much about death before. But now, when a whole fourteen powers have crawled back into their dens from our new republic—I can't stand the thought of being killed by some bandit's bullet. I want to work on my own land. And when

I see it torn up by rascals it hurts like it was my own heart being torn to pieces."

"Yes, there's no power can take the land from us now," said Bondar.

"That's my mind, too. And I want to live under our own government, our own way. When Savchenko explained the Party programme at the factory not long ago, it was all so much, so many things to hope for, you just couldn't take it in. The whole country seemed to be rising in front of you like the sun. And it makes me want to live, I can't say how much! As if I'd only just been born. You're older, Ivan Timofeyevich, I suppose you don't feel it the same way."

"No, I feel it too," said Bondar with restraint, then after thinking a moment he added, "That's why I'm here with a rifle instead of crawling into a hole like a badger. . . . Look, they're falling back."

"They're off! That was a grand idea of Miroshnichenko's, with the gun."

"Wait a bit—who's that galloping from the woods?" said Bondar, alert.

Again hoofs thundered along the road, and shouts of rejoicing came from the bandits.

"Looks like there's help coming to those devils," said Bondar uneasily, listening to the dull echo from the ground.

"That's what's happening."

It certainly was a stroke of bad luck. Had the reinforcements come just one hour later, nothing would have been left of the enemy.

Donelaitis rapped out an order and the Red Armymen moved over the field. The artillerymen dragged the gun back, then Miroshnichenko spoke in a businesslike way, and shells began exploding along the road at short intervals, feeling out the moving stream of horsemen. But with whistles and wild yells, the bandits dismounted and dashed forward in an effort to encircle Donelaitis' men.

"Hold tight Stepan!" and Bondar, bending low, ran to meet the advancing black flood.

Kushnir looked about disgustedly, sighed and followed Ivan Bondar, firing at intervals.

Bullets filled the fine night with their fierce whine, and clipped off the edges of clods. . . . So this is the first sowing of our fields, flashed through Miroshnichenko's mind.

A small group of bandits ran to the gun. Donelaitis and Miroshnichenko rushed to stop them. But at that moment a machine-gun gave a short, angry burst from a gully, coughed, then as though impatient with itself, resumed its snarling fire.

"The workers' column!" shouted Miroshnichenko happily, and fired again and again at the dark enemy figures fleeing over the ploughed fields.

"Why do you think so?" asked Donelaitis, listening intently to the firing.

"I know Fialkovsky's hand. You hear how he fires? In short businesslike bursts, you can hear him enjoying it. A worker doing a job."

"Good! Savchenko won't let them get away now. He's a grand lad."

"He's coming this way. He always thinks of people first."

Sure enough, the Kombed members were soon joined by the workers' column from the sugar refinery.

"Well, how's it going? Giving 'em hell?" asked the tall Savchenko, coming up revolver in hand. Even in the darkness his wavy white hair seemed to gleam and his eyes to sparkle with a gay, youthful light.

After the 1905 Revolution Pavel Savchenko, a merry, curly-headed lad, had been sent from the Kamenets-Podolsk fortress to Siberia. He had returned calm, rather stern, his forehead seamed with lines, his hair touched with grey—a competent, well-read Bolshevik with no little experience of Party work, including illegal work. He found none of his family left. His widowed mother had died in poverty. His brothers and sisters had gone to work on estates or in factories. The manager of the sugar refinery, remembering what a good worker Savchenko had been, gave him a job after a lot of fuss.

In 1917 Savchenko and the revolutionary workers had driven off the armed guard set by Prince Kokhan, who owned the refinery, and placed it under the control of the trade union.

"We seem to have been just in time!" Savchenko, now commander of the workers' column, leaned over the dew-wet gun-carriage.

"Just in the nick," Miroshnichenko answered gaily. "I was beginning to think—well, anyway, we were in a tough spot. We'd have been done for if you hadn't come along."

"Chosen a bad place to manoeuvre in. Let's turn the gunfire on the forest, Svirid, cut off the kontras before they get their wits back."

"That we will."

Savchenko ran to Fialkovsky and bent over him. The experienced machine-gunner's hands vibrated on the gun as though shivering with cold as the belt, winding like a snake, fed the breech with cartridges.

"Hey! Fialkovsky's gun's too hot! Comrade Ilyin, bring water!"

"Right away!"

"D'you hear the ring in all our folks' voices?" said Bondar, smiling into his short moustache.

"Something to be glad about—the workers coming. They're our hope!" Kushnir fired, aiming at a flash, then added dreamily, and most unexpectedly, "Just look round about—look at the earth wakening with the dawn. . . ."

25

When darkness fell Krupyak's column emerged unhurriedly from the Lityn woods. Riders moved like denser clots of darkness, stirrups and bits jingling musically. Behind them came Safron Varchuk in his britchka. He had found time to hurry to the doctor for some quinine powders, but was now cursing himself for the ill-considered haste of his actions. Why rush into the water without seeking a ford? If he had not begged Krupyak for help, if instead he had talked to him quietly, he might now be on his way to the regional committee to get

his land back, instead of riding with bandits. Whatever new laws there might be, they would be better than robbery and murder. Sichkar liked this sort of thing, but Varchuk would have kept away from it, if they hadn't struck at his tenderest spot.

Safron racked his brains to find some means of slipping away from the moving mass. What if one of the villagers saw him? Then all the land he would get would be a dead man's share. . . . The graveyard with its low mounds rose before his eyes, he heard the singing in the chapel, saw the shine of candles. He spat three times over his left shoulder to drive away the evil vision, but then looked again at the spot where he had seen it. And suddenly he realized there actually were two points of light in the field. Who could have lighted campfires—wayfarers stopping for the night, or some ragamuffins who'd been given land and couldn't wait till morning to come out to it?

A lean, one-eyed bandit ranged up beside the britchka.

"You from Novobugovka?" he asked Varchuk.

"More or less," Varchuk replied evasively.

"Have they all got horses as good as these?"

"The Kombed have better ones. Go and get them!"

"Mebbe we'll swop over?"

"Those who swop are left without breeches."

"A pity you're related to our batko," laughed the bandit and moved away.

The column turned on to the highroad, and Safron's thoughts still surged uselessly; he could find no clever trick that would get him away from the bandits. He was tired with thinking. In all his life he had never felt so tired, and there ahead loomed the crucifix by the roadside. This was where Sichkar would be waiting.

Safron and Krupyak drew up to the side of the road and reined in their horses.

"Ivan—are you there?" Varchuk called softly.

A dark figure rose from the ditch separating the lime-trees from the fields; even in the darkness it was easy to recognize Sichkar's characteristically stooping form, his back more rounded than usual, humped by the bag of food slung over his shoulders.

"Thank you for helping us, thank you very much." Sichkar's tone was full of respect as he carefully took Krupyak's thin fingers in his great hand.

Krupyak drew his cigarette to a glow and saw the round patches on Sichkar's red cheeks and the eerie red spark reflected in his eyes from the cigarette. The fierceness of those eyes struck him. Only war could give birth to a glare like that, he thought, and removed the cigarette from his mouth; he had seen enough of his chance companion's looks.

Sichkar saw he had taken Krupyak aback and smiled, well pleased. He liked to see eyes fall before his piercing stare—it showed, he thought, that the other man was weaker.

"How's things, Ivan, nothing new?" asked Varchuk, who still hoped for a stroke of luck that might enable him to get away from the bandits.

"Yes, there is something," Sichkar came up closer. "Miroshnichenko isn't spending the night in the fields, he's back in the village."

"And Goritsvit?"

"He stopped by the river."

Safron feared he might have to lead the bandits to Miroshnichenko and his thoughts worked with feverish speed.

"This is bad luck," he said quickly to Krupyak. "Well, the best thing will be for me to take a few of your men off for a little while to settle Goritsvit, and Ivan'll go to Miroshnichenko."

"All right," said Krupyak.

He rode over to the bandits, named one to lead the column going to the village, snapped out an order and with a swing of his whip divided the men into two groups. They tore their guns from their shoulders and rode off in different directions.

The cottages in the village gleamed white. The bandits lashed their horses and Sichkar, clinging to a stirrup, flew at top speed along the dusty road. The food-sack hampered him, and his heart reminded him that youth was left well behind.

That accursed sack cut into the flesh under his arms, the weight of bread and fat pork wrung sweat from his body, it trickled down his back, stomach and hips. Stars, cottages circled before his eyes in a mad dance. But here was Miroshnichenko's house. Sichkar let go the stirrup and leaned drunkenly over the gate. It creaked under his weight, swung and creaked again. It was a long, long time since its owner had mended it. The bandits encircled the house, someone drove a rifle-but through the window and splinters of glass fell with a plaintive tinkle.

"Hey! Out with you, commune!"

"Come out or we'll burn you alive!"

A light appeared, then came the crying of children.

Sichkar left the gate and made for the sound. The bread in his sack bumped with his steps, rubbing his sweating back. Zinka must have packed it badly.

Bandits were moving about inside, amid the dancing flames and shadows of torches. A flickering red light lay on two little figures in homespun shifts, motionless, frozen with terror.

"Where's your father?" snarled the lean bandit, pointing his gun at them. His one remaining eye protruded and caught the fiery reflection of the torches. "You hear me? Where's your father?"

"I—I don't know. . . . He went out to the fields in the evening," stammered Nastenka, choking, shivering with cold and fright, feeling under her feet the sloe-berries the bandits had spilt.

Sichkar entered the room, straightened his sack and took his revolver from his pocket. He glared angrily at the children—they were Miroshnichenko's blood. If they grew up they'd be like him, if they were dead their father's strength would be weakened. Dead children can break a man's spirit.

Hiding his hand with the gun behind him, he went up to the bandit, crushing the berries underfoot, and examined the children with eyes that knew

no pity. There was terror on their faces. Suddenly Nastenka recognized him and a spark of hope lighted her big eyes.

"Oh please—please—save us!" she cried. She covered her face with her hands and tears trickled from under her fingers.

"Tell them where your father is and nobody'll touch you, tell them, my child." Sichkar came closer.

"But I don't know! Really I don't!" The little girl looked up at Sichkar with truthful eyes.

He knew she was not deceiving him, and pointed his gun at her.

Levko, terrified, flung his arms round her, put himself in front of her to shield her. "Please don't kill my sister!" he implored Sichkar, whom he had never seen before. "Please! I'll watch your geese for nothing if only you won't...."

The word "geese" brought a fleeting memory to Sichkar of a childhood song—"Fly away goose, fly away swan, take me flying with you...." He noticed a yellow sunflower petal caught in Levko's hair and remembered his own reply to Zayatchuk, "The father's heads need to come off but the children—let them live."

Had they been dumb, he would have let them live; perhaps they would have looked after geese, perhaps they would have gone to school....

Two dry cracks, and the children fell. A round loaf slipped from Sichkar's badly packed sack and rolled across the floor to the bodies, where blood darker than the berries already covered the floor. Still holding his gun, Sichkar snatched up the bread and pushed it as far down as possible into his sack.

The thin bandit, to whom murder was just part of the day's work, looked at him in surprise.

"Will it ruin you to lose a loaf?"

"It's not just a loaf any more, it's a clue," Sichkar answered and slipped out of the house like a snake.

26

The moon came up late, and the ragged clouds lightened, curdled, came to life and fled to the west. The river gleamed faintly between its banks. The horses dozed, heads hanging, but Timofi could not sleep.

Deep in his thoughts, his hopes, he paced slowly over the soil, treading as he had never trod before. Although silent with others, he now spoke freely in the solitude, the Goritsvit way, discussing everything with wife and son. He felt as though they were close to him, he need but call and they would hear him and come.

Now Timofi's words were tender and warm as wheat waving gently under the July sun. And a new light lay upon the constant hopes and cares which live side by side in the heart of a poor peasant who has never in his life eaten to repletion. His thoughts were filled with poetry, like every dream of a life that will be richer, fuller.

We shall plough you up, ye fields, and sow you. Not grain, but our hearts shall be laid beneath your furrows, so that you may bring forth our happiness, so that there may be no more misery, no more beggars in the world, so that you do not send your toilers to the ends of the earth for coppers, for a bitter crust of labourers' bread. . . . With all his being Timofi took to himself the land which had been given to him according to Lenin's law.

He remembered something he had heard from Miroshnichenko. The peasants of one Russian village came to Lenin, bringing him a great loaf as a gift. And Lenin took it and thanked the people. . . .

Again he let his thoughts dwell on the warm grain that would grow on his fields, he almost felt it running through his fingers. He could have walked like that over the fields to the very end of the world, engaged in silent converse with the ears of grain, caressing their heads as though they were his children.

Suddenly he heard hoofbeats nearby, then rifle shots followed by a muffled machine-gun answer. A wounded horse moaned in a voice almost human; it seemed to rise from the ground before him and rushed past the cart, head tossing high, then swung sharply round to the east. A youthful voice threw a high-pitched, broken "oh" into the sky and was silent.

Timofi started to run back to the cart, but half way there he remembered Miroshnichenko had taken the rifle and stopped to think.

He was startled by the vicious zip of bullets close to his ear, or so it seemed. Falling flat on the damp ground he crawled cautiously towards the firing.

In a few minutes Timofi could see the fight proceeding close by and also its inevitable outcome. Four Red Arymen could not hold out long against the thirty bandits who had dismounted and were closing in on the devoted handful in a semi-circle.

The machine-gun stopped. For a moment Timofi thought that was the end, but then he saw by the gunner's movements that he was only changing the belt. Tense, Timofi watched the bandits rise, dark shadows, and run forward. . . . If only he gets the belt on in time—every cell of his body prayed for it.

Another short spurt would mean the end. Timofi shut his eyes. An agitated young voice said something to the machine-gunner who ground out through his teeth with angry calm, "Right away, Comrade Commander."

Spitting, choking, the machine-gun spurted white flame. The line of bandits fell prone with shouts and curses. Covered by the machine-gun, the Red Arymen ran swiftly back—the ends of the bandit chain extended to the Bug.

"Comrade Commander." Timofi rose and stood motionless before a medium-sized man in a tall Kuban hat with a revolver in his left hand. "Follow me down to the river, I'll take you over in a boat."

"Who are you?" Stern, searching eyes examined him. In the dim light the commander's face looked blue-white, almost transparent.

"Me?" Timofi did not quite know what to answer. Did they take him for a bandit? "I'm a poor peasant. I'm for Soviet power."

"I'm through." The machine-gunner cursed. "Not one bullet more." He picked up the gun, burned his hands on the barrel and cursed again, with weary bitterness.

A dark trickle of blood was falling from the commander's right hand. A bullet must have gone right through it, and the blood dripped from the pain-stiffened fingers as though all of them had been hit.

"Agh—hell!"

"What's the matter, Ivanenko?"

"Just got stung in the shoulder," said a man lying in a furrow, still firing furiously.

"Are you able to run?"

"Yes."

Under murderous fire they raced to the river. Bullets snapped viciously through the bushes fringing the bank, but their strength became less and so did the sense of danger as the men came closer to the water.

The moon peeped out through a gap in the clouds and its trailing gleams showed boats floating on the river; a sighing wave knocked them gently against stumps of willows—perhaps those very willows from which they had been carved, then again they hopped like caged birds, now striking the bank, now straining from it with a rattle of chains.

The blood was dripping fast from the commander's hand on to the yellow sand by the river, making a scattered trail to the boat.

Timofi could see no sign of pain in the commander's pale, calm face, the typical face of a Russian worker, or in his dark eyes with their amber gleam, nor was there any indication of weakness or weariness from loss of blood. The wounded man was fully master of himself, a concentration of will-power.

"Hold your hand up, Comrade Commander, it's your life that's flowing out," said Timofi in his usual brief, dry manner, and pulled with all his strength at the thin, rusty chain. His fingers whitened, numbed, but gradually one of the links opened up, and Timofi smiled. No need now to waste time with the lock.

They were almost in the middle of the river when dark figures appeared on the bank. Rifles flashed and tiny fountains sprang up round the boat like blue-winged dragon-flies. All the men breathed more easily when they stepped out on the opposite bank.

"Thank you. In the name of the Red Army, thank you." With his left hand the commander took their guide's hand firmly.

"Thank you. For everything. Let me bandage your wound. My shirt's clean." With a quick movement Timofi ripped open the front of his best shirt. Tiny buttons scattered on the ground.

Smiling, the commander took a small package from his pocket, told the machine-gunner to bandage Ivanenko's shoulder and raised his hand. Blood trickled from his fingers into his sleeve.

"No need. What's your name?"

"Goritsvit. Timofi Goritsvit."

"And mine's Markov. What can I do for you in return?"

"No need for anything. Been a soldier myself. The Revolution was made for—"

He wanted to say more, but he always found talking difficult, and now, with thick blood still dripping and dripping on to the faded grass of autumn, it was impossible. So he ended in an even, practical tone, "Go to Ivchanka, if those bandits try anything there, the villagers themselves'll drive them off."

"Good-bye, then."

Pale, his lips tight with pain, Markov took leave of Timofi and turned on to the field path leading to the cottages, his wounded hand held to his breast.

Fine lads, Timofi thought, with much the same feeling as though they were his own sons. And the Red Armmen were thinking of him, speaking warm words of the stranger.

What he had just done—and it might not have ended so well, for death was everywhere—raised Timofi in his own eyes and brought joy to his heart. But then uneasiness stirred him; the bandits might take the horses. . . . He listened intently.

Voces raised in dispute carried clearly over the water. Suddenly his ear caught that of Safron Varchuk.

Perhaps he was mistaken?

Dark figures slowly climbed the slope, then the rattle of hoofs faded in the distance.

Varchuk, however, had recognized Timofi still earlier, when he had jumped down the bank, leading the Red Armmen to the boat. And the recognition had brought such panic that sweat had trickled down his sloping forehead.

What if Goritsvit had noticed him?

Dawn was approaching.

Varchuk's eyes, round with apprehension, searched the river, while his mind revolved the questions—had Timofi seen him, and would he come back? And like other religious believers in difficult moments he transferred his troubles to God, sending him awkwardly phrased prayers, asking him to make Timofi return.

Oars creaked somewhere on the river. Safron at once forgot his prayers and God too.

A boat nosed its way out of the darkness. The oarsman, tall and powerful, rowed standing. The boat drove softly into the sand, Timofi jumped on to the bank and a shot rang out.

For an instant Safron felt as though it had struck his own heart. He tore at his breast, his eyes fixed on Goritsvit.

He's swaying, thought Varchuk in wild joy, and his hands slipped down, only to clutch at his heart again convulsively—for with unexpected agility Timofi flung himself into the river. After some time his head showed for a moment above the surface, disappeared, appeared again.

The bandits leaped out of their ambush and the water round Timofi seethed with miniature fountains. Safron, frantic with fear and rage, rushed about among the bandits pointing, "There he is, look—there! Just come up!"

"Oh, get out, you—" a tall, clumsy fellow snarled at last—the man who had met him on the bridge. "Think we haven't any eyes?"

Varchuk withdrew into sulky silence, but still pointed whenever the swimmer's head showed above the surface.

The cold water of the autumn river seemed to scald Timofi. His whole body was tensed in effort. With rapid jerks he tore off his jacket and boots under water, came up for a full breath and swam. His strong arms divided the resistant water like oars. He heard nothing of the bullets hissing round him, his ears ached naggingly.

It's all right, Timofi, a bullet with your name on it isn't made yet, he told himself, as he had done at the front. By the word "bullet" he meant not so much a piece of lead, as death itself, for wounds he had had in plenty. His St. George cross in the box at home had dark blood on its orange and black ribbon. No, it never even occurred to him that he might be killed now. They might wound him. Nothing new in that. But he'd get over.

The water hissed around him. He crossed a strong under-current, his powerful arms conquered its pull, every muscle could feel the resistance of the icy water. Never mind, Timofi, he told himself, your bullet's not made yet! And in his concentrated effort he did not see that the water was already reddened with his blood.

Then something new, something dreadful happened. His strong body suddenly bent and twisted, tortured bones and muscles rigid as though frozen. Fighting the pain, Timofi tore himself from his stony immobility. His arms, shoulders and head obeyed his will, but his contorted legs pulled him down.

Timofi understood.

For the last time he raised his head above the water looking sorrowfully at the broad banks in the mist of dawn. He felt only sad. He had no fear, but his whole being, already half dead, was seized by a great regret for something that would never come now. He did not realize that his regret was for the years he would never know, the years which had for so long lived in his fairest hopes, in his dreams, but had not come to his waking world. Now they had been very close—and were slipping away for ever. . . . Perhaps Dokia, Dmitro—a warmth came into his eyes.

He saw his childhood, the rainy nights on the Galician front, his friends who had been killed—and the land. "Landlords' land? Not landlords' land, our own. Used to be landlords' land, now it's ours, given us by Lenin's law."

He saw himself walking with Miroshnichenko and Dmitro along the high-road, with the grain on both sides. And in the distance the dear face of Lenin smiled at him. "Peasants brought him a great loaf. . . ." But it was they themselves who had brought bread to their leader. Miroshnichenko had mixed everything up. . . .

And in the last seconds of his life, his whole being was concentrated on that future, untasted, although so near—after all, his whole life long had been lived for the future, the past had held little that was joyful.

Timofi did not feel the icy water bind his weary, swollen sinews or the swift current carry him to the broad reach.

"Done for," said the tall, clumsy bandit, slung his gun over his shoulder and climbed the path up the slope.

"A stubborn devil," said another, lighting a cigarette with satisfaction.
"Look how far he swam in that cold water!"

Safron wanted to ask them to wait a bit, in case Timofi came up yet again; but realizing their mood he did not risk it, only stood motionless, watching the river, his face stiff with tension.

The bandits climbed the slope, hoofs beat a tattoo, the dawn flung a crimson scarf along the horizon, the waves gradually released the empty boat from the grip of the sand and with a sigh it floated down after the man who had rowed it; still Varchuk stood among the bushes on the bank.

"Jesus Christ, in thy mercy help me a sinner in my hour of need. If only...." His mind ranged over all his most immediate cares and his dark, unshining eyes set in swollen purple half-moons were misty with the moisture of dawn.

Singing gradually mingled with Safron's monotonous muttering, singing coming from the river. At first it did not disturb his prayers, but suddenly he started—the first song had ended, giving way to a lively irreligious ditty. There was mischief and something like apprehension in the singer's voice, but when the ditty ended there was a burst of laughter, and two voices, closer now, took up a fresh song with the highest delight.

*Bored in Heaven and cold as well,
God picked up a poker,
Went to warm himself in Hell,
Took a job as stoker.*

Godless heathen! Varchuk almost jumped from his hiding place in his righteous indignation, but stopped himself in time and peered at the river.

A boat floated into view at the very spot where Timofi's head had appeared the last time. A creel lay in the bottom, and two youths were rowing—Gritsko Shevchuk and Varivon Ocheret.

"A grand song, Gritsko! You ought to try singing it at home—your old man'd have your hair out and the scalp with it," laughed Varivon, looked about him and whispered, "Look, somebody's nets. What about giving them a shake?"

"Are you crazy?" Gritsko answered, alarmed at the very idea.

"Why not! We'll just try one. There's nobody about. Not a single soul." Varivon picked up a stick and pulled the net closer. "Ugh—it's heavy. Must be full of fish. Help me, Gritsko!"

One more hard pull—and both froze with horror. From the water emerged the peaceful face of Timofi Goritsvit, with half-closed eyes. The first rays of the rising sun sparkled on the grains of sand caught in the lines raying out from eyes and mouth.

As realization came to Dokia, as the first numbness of shock wore off, grief felled her. Without a word, without a groan she collapsed on her knees in the middle of the yard, her hands clutching at her breast. She tried to rise but fell again, and her heavy braids, unwinding, covered her. Then with an effort she crawled to the gate, scraping her knees till they bled, and clung with both hands to the post.

A cart creaked monotonously as it came down the street. Dokia pulled herself up and rushed blindly out.

A black covering lay over the cart, the hue of disaster itself. Still unable to believe, Dokia drew the covering back, and the ground swayed beneath her feet. Before her lay the calm, waxen face of her husband. There was no sign of struggle or suffering, only a faint shade of regret, as though even now he was troubled by something he had not accomplished. The face swam before her eyes, it seemed to come close, closer, as though Timofi were merging with her.

"Bandits wounded him. . . . Fell into the water. . . . Cramp. . . ." Words came to her as though through a dense wall of rain, but who spoke, who tried to comfort her she did not know. Her whole body arched backwards in her agony but her eyes saw nothing of the sky, only the black covering, the body. She swayed and collapsed over the side of the cart. Her head lay on her husband's wet clothes, her thick hair lay spread over the cart.

"Timofi. . . . Timofi, come back," she whispered, touching his cold hand with its knotted blue veins. Suddenly she saw that his shirt had only one glass button left, solitary, like a tear.

"Timofi—come back!"

"Mother. . . . don't cry like that. . . . Mother!"



With difficulty she moved her hands from her face, and for a moment could hardly say whether it was Dmitro or Timofi himself before her.

"Mother. . . ."

Tears rose in the youth's reddened eyes, he bit his lip to keep back his own sobs. The effort gave added years to his face, drew lines across his forehead, which made Dmitro very like his father in that moment.

"Tim — Dmitro, son, am I crying? It's my—my heart draining away."

Tears streaming down her face, Dokia took a step towards her son. He had brought with him the scent of fields and autumn leaves, as Timofi had the evening before. And with that came the full understanding that her husband was gone.

Miroshnichenko approached—grim, frowning, looking many years older. He stooped silently over Timofi, heavy with his own grief and that of others, then made his way home as though in a hideous dream.

The metallic sadness of a tolling bell throbbed over the village. Men removed their hats as they passed the cottage and women shook their heads sadly. Even enemies did not rejoice today, even upon them the blood of children lay heavy.

Miroshnichenko's house and yard were filled with people, and still more and more came, from distant woods and hamlets—dusty, stern, in heavy peasant coats and stiff homespun, with wordless peasant grief, carrying the blessed bread in their hands. With cracked lips that bore sometimes prayers, sometimes curses, they kissed their Svirid, the man they knew as simple, plain and just, and laid the bread on the bench because the coffin stood on the table. Kind friends had laid brother and sister in the same coffin—let them be together in the next world too, to run over its green meadows and through its woods, seeking there the spring they had not found on earth.

All day and all night Miroshnichenko sat beside his children, his head hanging heavily on his breast which had so often been bared to death. People saw the lines etch themselves deeply round eyes from which no tears flowed, as though they had dried up. It was only as the next day broke that he rose, left the house and stood swaying by the fence looking at the east; and there at last the sun, not death, brought difficult tears to his eyes. He did not dry them and they fell, unheeded, on the dew-wet weeds which his children's feet had trodden only two days before.

Beyond Karpets' cottage the sadness of centuries floated from the strings of a *kobza* and a lonely voice that wrung the heart.

*Let the blood of man not flow
'Tis more than water, well we know.*

Blind Andriyko pleaded with those who had sight to be human beings, not to shed the blood of men. Blood is not water which lies in the clouds, on the grass, in lakes, in the wells. Blood is the life of fathers and children, it is the maiden's tender blush and the brightness in the eyes of a youth, it is courage in battle and the merry laugh of a child.

Now Miroshnichenko was with his foster-mother, Katerina Chumak, whose face was burned dark as the soil itself. Six sons of her own and four children of others she had carried in her arms, brought them up in the cradle and in the boat by the river that they might learn to love people and the land and the water, the fish in the river and the bird in the sky, the soil of the fields and the tree on the bank. She herself was woven of love, song and toil. Uncomplaining, she did the hardest work, first women's work and after Karpo's death men's work as well. On the good fields she reaped a stack and a half, cut sheaves of curly peas; she brought in oats and barley as capably as the best reaper; she was a fine thresher, ground the grain on a hand-mill, made shirts for the children and embroidered them too, and thatched house and barn. When the work was very heavy she only wiped her forehead and kept her thoughts to herself, when it was well within her strength she sang songs or laughed with her slow-moving Karpo. She had a quick wit and a racy tongue, in sparring with her husband she left him far behind; he even threatened to beat her for it at times, but actually he never laid a finger on her.

Katerina met her foster-son at the edge of the vegetable plot where the warm light of evening lay on the thickly-growing hemp, sunflowers and garden flowers, and the river breathed its evening freshness. Her whole life long Katerina Chumak had known the river as friend and enemy, sometimes tender and caressing like a sleepy infant, sometimes wild and savage as a tiger. Now one of her hands held a sickle, its teeth dark with green juice and soil, and the other was pressed to the breast that had suckled Svirid. Standing beside him she seemed a child herself, only her expressive, golden-brown eyes held the burden laid on her in the end of one century and the beginning of the next. Two centuries with their difficult days had ploughed the frequent furrows round those eyes, but had failed to kill their shining courage, their wisdom, their laughter and the directness that rejoiced the straightforward and confounded the wily.

"Mother—I've come. And again in my greatest trouble."

"You suffer for others, my son. Somebody must suffer for them, so that they shall be better." The mother rested her sickle on her shoulder and went up to her biggest son.

He took her dry hand which disappeared entirely in his great palm. And standing before this small woman, seeing the sadness in her wise eyes, he once more felt himself a child. A little boat rocked beside the willows, and this too held a fragment of his distant childhood when Katerina had taken him to wonderful, mysterious places, from which they returned with fish, purple willow or hay. And when the stars glimmered and blurred before his eyes into golden butterflies, she sang him lullabies about the crane, the sea-gull, the stork or the nightingale, for she loved all birds.

They looked at one another, then turned their eyes to the river, which flowed gently beneath swarms of dancing midges. Birds described curving lines over the water, they seemed to scoop up the rosy light with their wings and carry it to their nests, on which blue dusk was already descending.

"Have you a little time, my child?" Katerina asked softly.

"Yes, I have time, Mother."

"Perhaps we can go to the other side? I cut some rushes there."

"Let's go then, Mother."

They took their places in the boat, but now it was the son, not the mother, who rowed. A last forgotten ray of sunshine lay upon the rosy water, the first stars gleamed in the sky and grey clouds like thickets of hornbeam rose up beyond the shocks on the meadow. The water rippled under the oars, and he seemed to hear in it the voices of his children. His heart ached for them, and his mother's for him as well.

"Look, Svirid, there's your island," and she pointed to a round patch of green rising from the rose and blue water.

Yes, that had been his first land, that miniature field with its few willows. Katerina, with no land of her own, had had to till the fields of others, and for each of her children she had sought out a tiny island on the Bug; the children had loved these small patches of land, and so had their mother, while hoping for a better lot. And now this had come to her, it had been measured out by her son whose love for the land had, it may be, begun with this tiny island.

On the low farther bank Katerina sat down on a bundle of rushes, and he lay on the grass.

"You'll catch cold, Svirid."

"Mother, if you knew how heavy my heart is."

"I know, my son. You have been twice to funerals of your own, and I four times." She raised him from the ground and made him sit beside her, on the crackling bundle. "My poor son!"

Restraining her tears, she told him of the first days and months of his life, the first time he called her mother, the first time he kissed her. And now as he kissed her grey hair and roughened hand he felt himself a child again. And her quiet voice soothed away his pain and anger, and drew the bitterness from him.

When night fell and river and sky merged into a single star-filled expanse, mother and son returned home. Now she rowed and he lay silently on the bundles of rushes. Fishes jumped round them, birds flew overhead in deeper blurs of darkness, and the ripple of water and whirr of wings lulled him to sleep. And in his dreams he was a child again with his mother singing to him of the stork as they walked over his island. Perhaps Katerina was indeed singing to soothe away his pain.

The next day Miroshnichenko said good-bye to his mother and set off for the Kombed. But on the way he turned towards his cottage which he had not even closed the previous evening. And the closer he came to it, the more heavily weighed his heart; again everything rose before his eyes, he heard his children's voices, saw them before him.

As he came to the gate, he did indeed hear a child's laughter. He stopped, powerless to go another step, choking, wondering if his mind was turning. But then the laughter came again, and the melodious voice of a woman,

a voice he did not know. With fear in his heart he opened the door and entered. A slender, golden-haired woman sat on the bench, stooping over the flaxen-headed baby that crowed and chuckled on her knees. As Miroshnichenko came in she rose and a timid smile flickered over her sweet, sorrowful face. She went forward to meet him, holding the child closely to her.

"Forgive me for coming to you like this, Svirid Yakovlevich," she said. "But there's no one else in the world who can help me in my trouble. And people have told me about you. . . ." Tears trembled in her eyes like morning dew.

The child turned to look at the stranger. Miroshnichenko held out his arms hesitantly and the baby stretched towards him. The mother wound his flannel blanket better and handed him to Miroshnichenko—she could not know that in doing so she pierced his very heart.

Miroshnichenko paced up and down the room while the woman told him through her tears how her husband had been taken to the Cheka. She told him everything about Danilo whom Miroshnichenko remembered well, told him how they had decided not to hide anything, not a single thing, to make a clean breast of it all and be done with it. They had so hoped that the new authorities would be lenient with him, forgive him. . . . Miroshnichenko felt certain they had been sincere, they could not have ill intentions.

"I don't know whether I can really help you," he said at last, after listening attentively to all she had to say. "But I'll go to the district Party committee today, and talk to a man there, a very good Communist—he was a teacher himself once, by the way. I hope he may be able to do something for you."

"Oh—thank you, Svirid Yakovlevich." The woman clasped her hands to her breast.

Petrik had been wriggling contentedly rubbing his eyes with his fists and now began to fall asleep. Miroshnichenko looked sadly at the little face, walked softly up and down, and then, under his breath, began to sing a song about the birds of his own childhood.

29

The wind furrowed the river, whipping up greenish foam. A curly-edged cloud over Ivchanka beyond the river suddenly poured down a torrent of rain from its grey and lilac heart.

"Grand rain they're getting over there." Semyon Poberezny squinted merrily at it from under his overhanging brows, handling his oars with the ease of daily custom.

"Yes, grand. If only the warm weather holds," said Ivan Rudenko, glancing at the darkening sky.

Miroshnichenko took no part in the talk, he sat hunched over, his eyes fixed in the bottom of the boat with its river weeds and fish scales. His hollow eyes found distances intolerable, the horizon seemed to advance frowningly on him

as it does at dusk. And his thoughts returned again and again to the place where his children lay beneath the cherry-trees. He had already covered the grave with turf and planted the marguerites that he had brought with the dahlias from the manor garden. For all his work he had taken only flowers, which had caused no little surprise among the villagers.

If there's no rain, I'll have to water them, thought Miroshnichenko.

Ivan Rudenko looked compassionately at his friend. He wanted to draw his heavy eyes from the boat. Rudenko had got a few days off from his work at the executive in order to stay with Miroshnichenko. And even his wife, who still lived in one of the outlying villages, did not grumble, only said with gentle reproach, "What with your work and your friends, you're getting a stranger to your family and the land."

"A stranger I'll have to be, then," he answered. "How often have I asked you to come and join me."

His wife, however, would not agree. "I can't go to a strange place. This is my home, my own soil. I can't live on bought stuff. A job's like the wind, you never know where it'll take you. The best job of all is the land."

The outcome was that for some time now she had lived like a widow and he like an old bachelor.

The nose of the boat slid up the sand with a hiss and Rudenko jumped out, holding the wooden holster of his mauser. Miroshnichenko followed, stepping into a foam-crowned ripple of water.

"Shall I wait for you?" asked Poberezhny.

"No, don't bother if you've anything you want to do."

"I've only one thing to look after—the fishing. My new land's sown, thank the Lord. I go to the field, stretch out my hands and the air seems to rise warmer than in other places." The fisherman, usually so silent, had found his tongue.

"No—really warmer?" Rudenko laughed slyly, and the shallow small-pox scars stirred on his face; they did not mar his looks, only brought the blood closer to the skin so that summer and winter, in joy and sorrow, Rudenko's face was rosy.

"Your own land's like your own child—always better than any other." Poberezhny's brows, heavy as though pasted on, flew up. "When I'd no field before my eyes or beneath my feet, I'd nothing to be gay about. This is a chancy way of winning your bread." He raised his oar and water trickled from it up his sleeve. "But all my life I've kept the wolf from the door with my oars, and even bought a horse, too." A warmth crept into his glance. "Come to me for supper, I'll give you grand fish stew."

Poberezhny pushed off and the boat danced through the water like a seal.

"He's a good man, that fisherman of yours, Svirid," said Rudenko, making another attempt to distract his friend's thoughts.

"Honest to the core, and stubborn as flint. When the Austrians retreated from Ivchanka he didn't want them coming through his village. So he hid himself on the bank and started rattling a spoon on an empty bucket. And he did suc-

a good job of it, the Austrians couldn't tell the difference between his drubbing and a machine-gun."

"What—really?" smiled Rudenko, glad to have succeeded in getting his friend to talk.

"Yes, it's the truth. That's why the Austrians took a roundabout road and avoided our village. You've got to understand him. You'll not find a quieter man than Semyon Poberezhny anywhere in these parts. And it's quite true that he's fought off poverty all his life with his oars. And then, all of a sudden, out he goes all alone against the enemy—and with a bucket, of all things! And nobody'd ever have known about it if Ulyana hadn't told, she was in the fields and nearly died of fright, thought the Austrians would shoot Semyon and her too."

"If Kulnitsky'd done that, Moscow'd have known of it long ago, not to mention Odessa. He'd have been a general by now!" Rudenko smiled, then frowned. "Never goes outside the district, has got nothing but his fine leather garments to brag about, does nothing but make fine speeches and bawl folks out, and plays the great revolutionary."

"Why don't you get rid of him?"

"Ever tried to catch an eel with your bare hands?"

"Not yet."

"Kulnitsky's that eel. Clever, tough, quick. He'll pick up another man's idea and before you know where you are he's either airing it all over the district as his own or else adjusting himself to it, whichever's best for him. He's the kind that'll crawl in at one ear and out of the other."

"Well, if it's only in and out again, that's not so bad. But what if he crawls into hearts and doesn't crawl out?" Miroshnichenko looked hard at his friend with his inflamed eyes.

Rudenko stopped short, struck by these words. But then he reflected—perhaps they were exaggerating Kulnitsky's faults? The failings of others always seem worse than one's own.

"He's more like to stick in one's gizzard. It's a long way to hearts, he can't reach that far, too small."

"A needle's not so big either, but if it gets into your blood—a man doesn't even know he's carrying death inside him. You think a bit about Kulnitsky, Ivan, and watch him too. Maybe I'm too hard on him, but he does get under my skin. Maybe he's just a careerist, and that's all."

"But you know what Lenin said about careerists? No ideals and no honour. . . . I'll keep an eye on Kulnitsky, a pity I don't see much of him. . . . Well, now let's look for the place where that band got Goritsvit."

Separating, they walked up and down the bank looking for traces. They rounded a granite rock that rose like a muscular fist. Between its fingers a sumac bush, locally known as paradise bush, flaunted its crimson banner. Rudenko stopped to admire it.

"Born of a miracle, and holds on by a miracle."

They went a little further and found the tracks of many feet mingled with cartridge cases among the bushes.

"It's from here the bandits fired at the poor fellow." Miroshnichenko sighed.

They walked up and down beside the water, then climbed to the fields. There, on the rich black soil, they found plenty of hoof marks. Rudenko's attention was attracted by two wheel ruts.

"Either that's the ataman's britchka, or someone guided the bandits here."

"Varchuk was off somewhere on his britchka that day, folks said he was going to the doctor. But which one?" Miroshnichenko's eyes narrowed.

"And did he come back from his doctor, or is he still there?" Rudenko wondered.

"I don't think he's back."

"The horse had a shoe loose on its near forefoot." Ivan Rudenko pointed to a clear print. "We'll make a mould of it, anyway." He made a rough ring round the print with toe of his boot and went on. He found the britchka tracks increasingly interesting; there was a recurring irregularity in the right rut. "Looks as if the rim was crooked on the right back wheel."

Miroshnichenko squatted down over the track and confirmed that it really did point to an iron rim being not quite in place.

"There's a dozen britchkas in the village. We'll take a look at all of them. Maybe we'll be able to smoke out that snakes' nest."

30

Safron Varchuk lashed his weary horses. Leaning forward, so that he seemed to hover over them, he beat them alternately with the long whip and with its handle. Someone had stolen his good whip near Vinnitsa and Safron had had to pay five hundred roubles, no less, for a bit of flabby rubbish. He broke the dry handle over the horses' backs, slunk into a lonely graveyard and cut off a pliant cherry branch, fastened the lash to it, sprang up on to the driving seat and the supple twig danced over the horses' backs.

Never had he driven his blacks so mercilessly. But he had to find that damned Yarem Gурkalo whom the foul fiend had carried off from the regional committee building to some village or other. Varchuk had struck his trail among the Mizyakov farms and followed it further into the Bug River district, looking about him as he drove with dark, dull eyes. Here too people had re-allotted the land; they were sowing late grain by hand on their new fields, might the black frost grip it!

He ran Gурkalo to earth at a big outlying farmstead with orchards on three sides and a pond on the fourth. And it was with no little surprise that he found the high official not inside the house, before a table covered with important documents, but in an oaken shed beside a still. On the high official's knees lay a wooden holster, and on the holster a bowl with spiced food and a greenish glass of spirit.

The shed was filled with smoke, and two indistinct forms moved in it like demons in hell, looking after the still and the important guest. The peasants' faces were eagerly conciliating, the official's condescending. Gурkalo did

not vouchsafe a glance at the new arrival, he merely pointed to a log on which Safron seated himself in silence. Through the haze hands came to him holding a glass, a piece of bread and ham, and all silently raised their glasses. This silence gave Safron the creeps—it was as though he had entered the nether regions. The smoke brought tears to his eyes and one tear fell into his glass.

"Don't mix the good spirits with water, man, you'll spoil it," said Gorkalo didactically, and fawning laughter came from the smoke.

"It's not water you drink with it these days, it's blood—half and half," Safron answered unflinchingly, and Gorkalo turned a long interested look on him.

"Got your fingers burned, eh?" His brown eyes, dulled with the drink, searched and probed Safron. And Safron understood that these half-seen men were of his own mind, that his words pleased them, and he continued confidently.

"Clear enough, and not only my fingers. Pick up even one live coal and you'll toss it from hand to hand, but this way, there's a whole shovelful deep inside you, where you can't get at it."

"That's a true word," came a voice from the haze.

"Fill his glass, let him put out his fire." Gorkalo's determined face with the shaggy brows and crooked, impudently tilted nose became jovial. The skin on his cheeks was coarse, but towards the temples it was thinner and pale blue veins showed through.

Gorkalo went out of the shed into the spacious yard, and Safron followed.

"Yarem Ivanovich," he said, lowering his voice, "I've a very big request."

"No requests today, please, my dear fellow. If you want to drink with me—good, I'm glad to have you, but business must wait till tomorrow." He wiped purple cheeks with his handkerchief and bared big yellow fangs in a grin.

So Safron had to drink almost the whole day long. The wood under the still had long ceased to blaze; the muzhiks who had been busy at the still had given up and were snoring on the floor. Gorkalo tried in vain to out-drink Safron. It was luck for Safron that a smoked ham hung overhead. The gleaming white surface of bone became longer as piece after piece was sliced off the rosy, juicy flesh, redolent of garlic. They even forgot about bread. With food like that to help him along, Safron could have out-drunk the devil himself. This won the favour of the high official; he smiled benevolently.

"You're a real man for the bottle, not a wet rag," and he jerked a scornful head at the snoring muzhiks who lay with sharp elbows thrust out as



though defending themselves even in their sleep. "What's brought you here?" he went on.

"I've a greeting and a bundle for you from Omelyan Krupyak," Safron answered readily, noting that the veins on the high official's temples had swollen out with the spirit he had drunk.

"From Omelyan?" Gorkalo's eyes lost their glaze and turned very sober. He glanced at the muzhiks and at the door. "When did you see him?"

"The day before yesterday."

"Where was he?" Gorkalo asked quickly.

"Lityn way."

"Have you known him long?"

"Since 'nineteen. When ours retreated, I picked him up in the woods, wounded, and looked after him at my farm."

"Where was his wound?"

"In the hip."

Varchuk's replies evidently satisfied Gorkalo. He moved the food and glass off his holster, rose, and suggested a stroll in the orchard. The sun was setting, and its last light quivered on the thick trees that emitted a fragrance of warm fruit and hollow trunks. Fish leaped in the pond and cows stood up to their knees in water, pink drops falling from their lips. Varchuk looked at all this and almost clutched at his heart, it reminded him so strongly of his own farmhouse and pond. But he had no fish, the women poisoned them with the hemp they soaked. If all went well, he would certainly breed carp and forbid his women to soak their hemp in the pond.

Here, beside the water, to the quacking of ducks, Safron told everything to Yarem Gorkalo, who listened in silence, rolling a cigarette from one side of his mouth to the other.

"Well. . . I think I can help you a bit in your trouble. I can't give you all your land back—wouldn't do to have you too rich under the new regime—but ten dessiatines, I think we can manage that."

"Even that's something, it's better than nothing. I'll pray to God for you as long as I live."

"He'll help me like incense helps a corpse." Gorkalo shrugged off Varchuk's prayers. "Only remember, it may take a little time. If the head of the land department isn't back you'll be in luck, if he is you'll have to wait till he goes away again. He's a man there's no getting round."

"Maybe we'd better set off for town right away, then?"

"It's late today. We'll go tomorrow. And now come and finish the spirit, before it spoils."

At dawn, Varchuk drove Gorkalo to Vinnitsa. The high official was amazing—his alert form and fresh face gave no hint of the previous day's carouse. He had taken only a mug of kvass in the morning; then, after whispering something to his host, he had leaped lightly into the britchka. On the way he learned all he needed to know and was quite glad to find that Varchuk was from Novobugovka, where Miroshnichenko was in charge.

Fortunately for Varchuk, the head of the land department had not yet returned. Gurkalo chose a favourable moment, went to Kulnitsky with his most confident air and proceeded to seethe with righteous indignation.

"I simply don't know what to do with that anarchist Miroshnichenko! He chops off the branch we're sitting on."

Gurkalo had chosen Kulnitsky's most vulnerable point.

"He ought to be put out of the Party," Kulnitsky brought his fist down hard on the table. "What's he been up to now?"

"D'you expect anything sensible of him? First he fought the state farm, now he's after a decent, efficient farmer. A man who's been given a silver medal, a man who's got a farm that could serve as a model for the whole district. If we do that sort of thing, we'll find ourselves sliding back to primitive, aboriginal scratching of the soil. And what'll the republic have to eat then?" He went on to paint the rosiest picture of the Varchuk farm.

At first Kulnitsky frowned, reluctant to settle the question without the head of the land department, but finally, convinced by Gurkalo's clever arguments, he decided on a compromise.

"We'll write an order returning part of Varchuk's land. I think twenty dessiatines ought to be enough for his model farm."

"Quite right! Fully in keeping with the spirit of the Revolution." Gurkalo lauded his chief, and both glowed with satisfaction in each other and themselves.

Varchuk took leave of Gurkalo in the latter's home. Two feelings battled in him—niggardliness and a sense of fairness. Should he pay the high official or could he get out of it? He reflected, however, that it could come in very handy to have a friend like this, and said with a stifled sigh, "I simply don't know how to repay you, Yarem Ivanovich, for your goodness. I know how much everything costs here in town. For some miserable cucumber you pay through the nose. Everything's dear under the new regime. So if you'd let me give you something for your trouble—? Please don't be offended, I'm a plain man and maybe I don't put it the right way. . . ."

"And I'm a plain man, I don't squeeze folks but I don't refuse what's due," answered Gurkalo, his shaggy brows twitching.

"Well, thank you, then," and Safron forced a smile, although he was really sorry the high official did not refuse the bribe. After all, there were those who were too proud to take a gift, you pushed something in a man's hand and he'd push it back again, and thank you into the bargain.

Safron unfastened his shirt, tore off the band sewn to the collar and several gold coins slipped out on to the palm of his hand.

"That's a clever idea," Gurkalo laughed.

"Trouble teaches wisdom," sighed Safron and laid the coins side by side on the table.

"Maybe we'll have a drink to celebrate?" said Gurkalo, glancing at the money.

"I've no time, no time, Yarem Ivanovich! You drink my health. And thank you again, thank you with all my heart." With that Safron hurried away.

Soon his britchka was rattling over the war-neglected Vinnitsa roads, while his mind feverishly turned over the question—what should he do with the horses? Suppose there were investigations in the village, suppose they started probing into things? Anything might happen! Hard as it was to part with good horses, Safron made up his mind to sell them.

The next day he sold horses and britchka without much bargaining to the peasant with whom he had drunk at the farmstead, and made his way on foot towards Kalich, hoping to meet a fellow-villager on his way home from market and get a lift. And how he thanked God later that he had got rid of the blacks and the britchka! As soon as he arrived at his farm, who should appear but Miroshnichenko with a stranger. Safron, sighing and groaning, told them he had been robbed—maybe by those same bandits who raided the village. Kuzma Vasilenko thought it very likely; Safron displayed the band torn off his collar—the bandits had even found that hiding-place and robbed him of his last money. He could see that he was not believed, but he continued to sigh and groan and ask for help in getting his horses back.

"Maybe we'll find them," said Miroshnichenko in a tone that set Safron's heart beating furiously.

There was no doubt about it—he was suspected. And in the evening Kuzma Vasilenko confirmed this. He said that Miroshnichenko and the vice-chairman of the district executive had spent a long time on the river bank, examining the tracks.

"All right, let them look all they want!" But although Safron managed to pull his dry face into a smile, his alarm mounted. Nothing could be proved against him so far, thank God, and he must see that there should be nothing in the future.

Two days later Safron returned to the farmstead where he had met Gorkalo and bought the horses and britchka back from the surprised peasant, paying more than he had been given. That night he drove to a high bank, unharnessed the horses and pushed the britchka down into the deep ravine. When the last crackle of breaking wood died away, he jumped on to the outrunner and took the both horses to the river. He slid off when they were in the water, encouraging them with whistles to swim, turned them to the deepest part and pushed the muzzle of his revolver into the ear of the wheel horse. There was a muffled shot, the horse's knees buckled and it collapsed into the water. The outrunner flung up its head in alarm, its long mane sweeping Safron's head.

"Keep still, you fool!" Safron pulled on the bridle to bring down the horse's head. There was another shot and the two animals floated down like dark islands and disappeared. He looked regretfully after them, not leaving the water's edge till they had gone. Then he crossed himself and with the same three fingers wiped tears from his eyes.

Reaped buckwheat lay on the dew-wet fields.

A fragment of mist at the very edge of Veremi's land quivered, flushed in the first rays of the sun, and vanished as though it had descended to fill the

rosy buckwheat with its succulent colour. The serrated outline of dark blue oak woods scintillated with threads of sunshine flashing up one after the other.

Denis Barabolya rolled along the field path, sniffing the fragrance of the air, his narrowed eyes taking in the fields, the clear horizon, the sun. The September quietness lulled his suspicious vigilance, and even the malice clotted within him was softened by the sweet dreaminess of restrained passion. For days and nights it had burned in him, heating his blood. Was it possible that the lass with the strange eyebrows had stirred in him emotions that had been dulled by lightly-passing lust?

There had been a time, long ago, when he had dreamed of true love, sung about it, sought it in the girls he saw and waited for the great festival of his heart. But while still at school he had fallen into the hands of an experienced, expensive prostitute who had stripped love of all its sacredness.

Now his dissipated heart was suddenly touched by a new feeling. What was it—pity for the unhappy orphan or that emotion which the books called love? But what pity could he have? “Thus spake Zarathustra, ‘Goest thou to woman? Forget not the whip.’”

At this moment such a thought could only evoke a smile—it harmonised so ill with the country-side and with his mood.

The sky gleamed with mother-of-pearl tints through the fringe of trees bordering the woods; heavy white clouds floated over it like ships in full sail. It was another world, far, far away from the one which surrounded Barabolya. For a moment he forgot his calling as spy, forgot Nietzsche and floated back on one of these celestial vessels to his quiet, untroubled childhood. But soon a human figure appeared on the horizon beyond the trees, and in an instant Barabolya’s face assumed its usual foolish expression, and his thoughts hardened. The figure turned into the distant fields and Barabolya, following it through narrowed eyes, rolled into the woods and almost put his foot on a cluster of mushrooms. He glanced round once more, then picked up the cool fungi; they almost spilled out of his two hands. A woodpecker was busy overhead; its hard tapping sounded loud in the silence.

Not far from a glade where beehives dozed in the sun, he saw Mariana’s slender figure. She had her back to him, and as he watched she stopped down to pull some herb; the movement drew up her skirt, and at the sight of her slender legs rising from her birch-bark shoes a wave of heat flowed through Barabolya’s veins. The girl straightened up, blew the soil from the herb and slipped it into her blouse.

Barabolya smiled, waited until she had moved a few steps away and then called as people call to one another in the woods, “A-oo, Mariana!”

The girl started and her shoulders sagged in her customary timidity as she looked round; seeing Barabolya, she dropped her eyes shyly, turned away and quickly removed the herbs which she had just slipped inside her blouse.

Shy as a wild thing, thought Barabolya. He pretended to notice nothing, went up to Mariana and gave her the mushrooms.

"Here you are, little mistress, found these on the way." He felt that his use of the word "mistress" stung the poor labourer like a taunt. . . . She'd like well enough to be mistress somewhere, he thought. Only a dog can find joy in serving others.

She walked in silence to a small, reed-thatched hut beneath the dark umbrella of a wild pear-tree.

"Well, this *is* nice."

He edged his way inside, and lay down on a bundle of straw barely covered with rags, Mariana squatted down on her heels and smiled, amazed to find that her guest did not disdain her poverty.

"Maybe you could fry the mushrooms?" Barabolya nodded at the smoke rising from the embers of a campfire.

"I've nothing to fry them with," the girl answered sadly, without raising her eyes.

"Doesn't the master give you any fat?"

"Yes—at Christmas and Easter time."

"You poor little thing," he said sympathetically and she flushed to the point of tears. "We'll bake them, then. Do you like baked mushrooms?"

"Yes."

"And me?" he asked in a jesting tone and looked at Mariana.

Her eyebrows quivered, she drew herself together and said nothing.

"Which do you like best—mushrooms or me?"

"You oughtn't to laugh at a poor girl." She cast a pained look of reproach at him, rose and went out to the beehives.

Barabolya jumped up, followed her and stood before her, blocking her way.

"Mariana—little Mariana, you're angry with me. Don't be angry, sweetheart." She raised eyes dull with pain.

"Don't call me that, or I'll cry," she implored in a voice barely audible.

"Why?"

"It was only mother—who ever called me sweetheart—a long, long time ago."

Tears welled over and she covered her face with narrow, tanned little hands. Close to the nails her thin fingers were red and disfigured by hangnails.

Barabolya tried to comfort her, he stroked her arms and shoulders and as though by accident touched her breast. It scorched him with resilient fire. What was it that drew him so strongly to this fragile body, reared on water and on grief? He led Mariana tenderly into the hut, made her sit down and even whisked the flies from her legs. That seemed to touch her more than all his words.

"How kind you are, Denis Ivanovich!" She turned wide, trustful eyes on him. And the murderer could not meet that gaze, he dropped his head.

With a single, light movement Mariana jumped up and slipped outside to put more wood on the fire.

"I'll make soup. Will you have some?" she asked confidingly and smiled.

"With you, sweetheart, I'll eat anything."

"Don't call me that," she begged again, took a small pot from a tree stump and ran off for water.

As soon as the soup began to hiss and bubble on the fire, she threw a handful of colza into a wooden mortar, pounded it and tipped it into the pot.

"That's our flavouring. I'm sorry, I haven't anything better." Again her trustful glance was turned on Barabolya.

"The plainest soup eaten with you will taste like an Easter feast," he answered, watching her hands busy over the fire.

They ate the simple peasant food from the same battered bowl. He kept putting his spoon on the girl's, holding it down, and was rewarded by her clear, childish laughter. After dinner Mariana showed him the woods. They found the den of an old badger which made itself at home in Veremi's vegetable plot in the autumn. They rested beside a spring, they ate wild apples and even climbed a late cherry-tree where they found a few small, withered cherries. As time passed the girl turned to him in childish affection; the fear gradually vanished from her eyes, she smiled happily at the sun, the trees and the earth, but she was still shy of smiling directly at him.

When the veil of dusk fell among the trees so that they seemed to become denser, Barabolya, much as he wanted to stay, felt it wiser to return home. He was afraid that some rash gesture might tear apart the delicate web of confidence he had woven, for this timid girl was not nearly so stupid as Veremi had made out.

Mariana walked with him to the fields and there, in the soft light of day merging into evening, she seemed still more desirable. Barabolya suddenly drew her to him.

"Mariana—would you marry me? I'm much older than you are."

He thought she would be frightened, would protest, but she only turned a long look on him and the light left her face.

"What can I be to you?" she said softly. "I can be your labourer, but not your wife. . . . For I've got nothing; nothing at all."

"And I've got nothing, Mariana, either. I'm just as poor as you are," he lied eagerly, pushing away the thought of his parents' farm and land.

"Is that true?" the girl cried gladly, then flushed and dropped her eyes in embarrassment.

"It's true, Mariana. . . . And poor folks ought to hold together. You'll be given land, I'll be given land too, and we'll manage to get along somehow. The new government is on our side," he added, invoking the government he had sworn to fight as long as he lived.

He saw the effect the very word "land" had upon the girl, he saw how she quivered, how her eyes, filled with sadness and hope, turned to the fields lying beneath the light mist of evening, how her unconquered spirit yearned for them.

Her gaze shook Barabolya; in the eyes of this farm girl he read his own sentence.

32

The powers of human endurance are boundless.

Life can wrest his family from a man, it may crush love and rob him of happiness, but still he remains a man. If, however, it is hope that is taken from him—that mirage that lures and deceives the heart—then he becomes a living corpse.

This was what happened to Danilo Pidoprigora. Many days had passed since he found himself in the inner prison of the Cheka, and after the first few times he was summoned to the investigating officer he ceased, to all intents and purposes, to live; he moved, he acted mechanically, as in a dream—or to be more accurate, it was only in his dreams that he was alive. They brought back from the years the clean happiness of childhood, the spring moisture of meadows bright yellow with buttercups, they gave him the golden-haired vision of his wife and allowed him to caress the little body of flaxen-headed Petrik whom the cockerels wakened in the night. And he sobbed in his sleep as his dreams showed him all this lost happiness. Then he was wakened unceremoniously by Gerus, a bony ex-shopkeeper with a bird-like profile who had been put into the same cell a week before.

"Wake up, you ante-lectual!" Gerus' narrow eyes and dry lips laughed as his bony fingers shook the last dreams from Danilo.

Gerus was an old hand—the revolutionary tribunal had sentenced him once, confiscating his shop and wares, but with the help of friends he had managed to escape scot-free. Now he had been pulled in for running a gambling den. Cheka men had taken three thousand gold roubles and seven thousand Austrian crowns from him, and Gerus had represented himself as a hopeless gambler, corrupted by the old regime.

"The Bolsheviks love penitence, so I give them all they want, I've beaten my breast black and blue. You do the same," he advised Pidoprigora, with a wary eye on the sliding shutter.

There was one thing, however, that troubled Gerus. He had got himself into the Vinnitsa wholesale purchasing society, and the society had foolishly refused to accept Soviet money from the co-operative members. This had a political tinge, and here Gerus had no use for penitence, he tried in every possible way to prove that it had been none of his doing. In general he was optimistically inclined and relied on his many friends to save him; it was his creed that everything on earth might vanish—tsars, kings and presidents, science and the church,—but trade would remain because it was the root of everything. And he gaily sang spicy little ditties.

About Pidoprigora's case he had a definite opinion. If Danilo really and honestly repented, they would let him go all right. The Bolsheviks let much bigger people off—even old-time generals were working for them. Why, wasn't it a fact that Kotovsky himself had as one of his commanders a man who had served with Petlyura! And he'd even been decorated. Gerus would willingly and gladly have changed places with Danilo.

Danilo, however, did not believe a word of it and waited dully for the worst. It was a dark thunder-cloud that hung over his head. He was accused of having come to the Soviet Ukraine as a secret agent of the Head Ataman. He swore that this was not true, swore it by the life of his only child, but the investigating officer only frowned and said, "Think again and tell me the truth about yourself and about Palilyulka."

"But I've never even seen him!"

"Perhaps your memory is at fault?" asked the very level voice of the investigator who had nothing, absolutely nothing even faintly reminiscent of the Cheka officers Danilo had heard about when he was with Petlyura.

"It's not, I swear it! Barabolya only intended to take us to Palilyulka."

"Smoke?"

"Thanks." Danilo mechanically took coarse tobacco from the investigator's embroidered pouch. He no longer expected manhandling as he had in the first days, but he expected no mercy either. Somebody, somewhere, had plotted against him.

"It'll be much better if you tell the whole truth," the investigator continued, carrying his lighter to his home-rolled cigarette.

"Where is it, that truth? If I say what you want, it'll be a lie and you'll shoot me for it; and if I refuse to lie you'll shoot me for that. So why should I be shot for a lie?"

"All I want is the truth." Thoughtful eyes surveyed him through glasses; their expression was like that of a teacher. Was it possible that teachers too worked in the Cheka?

Again the guards led Danilo down the long, narrow corridor to his cell, where he collapsed on his pallet longing for one thing only—sleep. His brothers and his wife had brought him food and clothing, and once Galya, in addition to bread, had sent him two cockerels, probably the ones that had wakened Petrik. Danilo looked at them and pressed his hands to his heart. He gave the cockerels to Gerus, who quickly disposed of both, chewing greedily and sucking the marrow from the bones. Then he got out a cigarette, knocked on the cell door and got a light from the guard outside through the shutter, praising the prison administration as he did so.

"Not got much to smoke themselves, and give us nine cigarettes every day. In the old days you got beaten up in prison if there was so much as a smell of tobacco." Gerus made a point of currying favour with all he met, even the guards—after all, they might say something higher up about his frame of mind.

Nothing, however, could distract Danilo's thoughts. Weary, monotonous, hopeless days dragged by, hour by hour erasing from his spirit all that remained from the time of freedom. He mourned bitterly for his wife, knowing that his return had made things worse than ever for her—previously she had simply been the wife of a man who had joined Petlyura, but now there was a worse disgrace. The wife of a spy, and her baby the son of a spy! Could there be a blacker stain on her youth, on Petrik's childhood? They would learn to curse the husband and father.

Exhausted with self-torment, his mind dulled as the days passed. Sometimes he felt his wits were leaving him.

One evening he was suddenly taken for interrogation to Sergei Pirogov, the chief of the special department.

The end! His eyes dimmed, his legs shook. Like a blind man he stumbled to the office, guiding himself with his hand on the wall of the narrow corridor.

At the door he halted involuntarily beside the guard—the bright light inside blinded him.

A middle-aged man sat at the table, his face was yellow with malaria and he hunched his shoulders chillily under the gaily-coloured Hungarian coat flung over them. Alongside fidgeted a husky, thick-set fellow in a Cossack coat and a tall hat with a blue top; a long pipe projected from his thick whiskers. He looked keenly at Pidoprigora and the department chief watched them both.

There was a long minute of silence, then Pirogov turned to the stranger.

"Have you ever met this man?" he asked, indicating Pidoprigora with a movement of his head, although he really needed no reply.

"Never set eyes on him." He removed the pipe from his whiskers and looked Pidoprigora up and down with contempt.

"And you?" The chief turned to Danilo and brought a yellow, wax-like hand up to his ear.

"Haven't had the pleasure, either." Danilo shrugged apathetically.

"Excuse me for troubling you." The chief extended a narrow, transparent hand to the stranger. "Thank you for helping me."

"You're welcome," the other laughed and turned to the door with a sigh of relief.

At that moment the telephone rang; the chief frowned, went up to a large box and took down the receiver.

"Comrade Nechuiviter?" he said, and his face lightened. "Good evening, Grigori Petrovich. . . ."

Those words stunned Danilo. This must be his old acquaintance, the man from whom he had taken Galya—walking about in freedom, under the sun and the stars. Galya still used his silk kerchief although she did not know whether the man who had first awakened her girlish heart was alive or dead. Danilo wondered whether he really was going mad, or whether the telephone conversation was in sober truth about him.

"What I think of your accused? The same as you. . . . In poor spirits."

Dreadful ideas flitted through Danilo's fevered mind. Perhaps it was a hallucination? Perhaps he was imagining things? No, this was his own fate that was being decided somewhere, decided foully, not face to face, but along a telephone wire. . . . So he, Danilo, was Nechuiviter's accused, and it was Nechuiviter who was sentencing him, his wife and his child for the love he had stolen. What crime will a man not commit for love? Tragedies written and sung throughout the world tell of it. But perhaps this was just the sick fancy of a diseased mind, tortured by the utter loss of hope? Where could Nechuiviter have come from? And if it really was he, how had he learned about Danilo?

. . . Thoughts whirled blindly.

Pirogov hung up the receiver and re-arranged the coat over his shoulders. Danilo ran up to him.

"Tell me—were you talking about me to Nechuiviter? About me?"

"Yes, you. So you guessed, did you? But don't get so excited, calm down," said the chief, surprised.

"My life—depends on—Nechuiviter—?"

"To a certain extent, yes."

"Then I beg you, I implore you—don't listen to him. . . ."

"Really?" said the chief, still more surprised.

"I beg you, I implore you, let me tell you—" Danilo's words tumbled over one another, he was afraid the chief would not listen, would have him taken back to his cell. "Once I caused Nechuiviter great sorrow—I won the girl he loved. . . . She's my wife, the mother of my only child. I know Nechuiviter couldn't ever forget that. And he's punishing me. . . . I suppose I'd do the same in his place. Don't believe what he says! Don't believe him. . . ." Danilo slumped into a chair, exhausted, and clutched his head.

The department chief stared in silent amazement.

"Like a bad novel." He rose and the coat fell to the ground, but he did not trouble to recover it.

"Yes, a bad novel," Danilo mumbled, trying to rise. All his pride, his human dignity had slipped off him like a torn garment, and his voice had become a pleading wail. "Don't listen to Nechuiviter, don't. . . . He's having his revenge for the girl I took. . . ."

The chief's face suddenly hardened and his waxen ears turned pink.

"Be quiet! You're a fool! A hopeless fool!"

Aha, thought Danilo dully, at last he's showing his true self.

"Stupid, malicious people have filled your head with the idea that Communists never think about anything but red terror. You've thrown mud here on a man you ought to know, judged him by your own standards. And have you any idea whom you should thank for leaving prison sooner than you might have expected? Nechuiviter, no other! Does that penetrate?" With his finger he tapped his forehead. "Comrade Nechuiviter has taken an interest in several cases, and particularly in yours. And you can think of nothing better than petty, mean jealousy! . . . You ought to be ashamed—if you haven't lost all sense of shame. Nechuiviter is a Communist, for him human justice and our cause stand much higher than any personal feelings."

Danilo looked at Pirogov with half-crazed eyes and burst into silent tears. Knocking against the walls of the corridor, he almost ran back to his cell; in his joy he actually kissed the distinctly repulsive, bird-like face of Gerus and then started singing so loudly that the guard appeared at the shutter. But even the guard couldn't damp his spirits.

That night, however, Danilo had a nightmare; he dreamed that Nechuiviter had changed his mind and decided to condemn him. Again Danilo cried in his sleep, but this time Gerus did not waken him.

"Let him suffer in his dreams at least, before he's released," the convict mumbled enviously, looking at the tossing Danilo, at his fresh, pouting lips which the next day would kiss his wife and son.

In the morning Danilo left the prison gate and at once made his way to the regional Party committee to seek Nechuiviter. But the man he sought was not there, he had gone after a robber band.

"When can I see him?"

The young short-haired girl raised her eyes to the disappointed visitor.

"You'll see him all right. Comrade Nechuiviter has a good heart, he'll see anyone when he's here."

For a time at least, Mariyka Bondar felt herself a real farmwife. It was true that Timofi, might the earth rest lightly as down upon him, had not given her a portion for her unborn child—Miroshnichenko had forgotten to tell him—but even so, none of her ancestors had ever had as much land as she had now. She had heard there were countries where land-hunger was unknown, but Podolye way even a barren field was worth more than a man's life, brothers would break one another's heads over a boundary mark knocked over by the plough. But Heaven be praised, there had been estate land—the owner a famous general too!—so the poor folk had received their share.

For the first few days after the allocation Mariyka forgot the house and everything on earth, she spent her time wandering about over the fields as though afraid they might disappear. But all her ploughed furrows, their boundaries marked by fresh, well fixed pegs, lay quietly between the muddy roads of autumn; on fine days sparkling gossamer floated over them, while in wet weather they breathed mist or rustled with rain.

When at last she became used to the thought that this was really her land, and not a dream, Mariyka started going to fairs, walking heavily among the short-legged oxen and scraggy horses that were no longer fit for the army. She listened eagerly to the prices and engaged in intricate calculations, although she had not a single coin to bless herself with.

At home she carried herself with dignity, trod the fields with her roughened feet and bore the meatless soup or millet-and-lentil porridge from the stove to the table as though it were some priceless gift. Ivan said nothing, only exchanged significant glances with his daughter Yugina, and both would splutter, almost choking over their food. But even this did not disturb Mariyka's serenity, she did not rap her daughter's head with the spoon or snap at Ivan, she only sighed and tapped her forehead with her finger—time for old and young to have more sense.

After a little while, however, Mariyka's serenity cracked and splintered. One day there was a rumour that Petlyura had broken through to the south from Letychev. Mariyka at once hurried round all the neighbours, listened to the most wildly differing tales, quarrelled with Ivan in passing, shook Yugina and in the evening, took bowl and candles to church and with tears implored God to make Comrade Lenin victorious over all the cruel men who had no mercy on the muzhiks.

After her prayers and tears Mariyka left the church with lightened heart. A true believer, she could see by the expression of the Almighty holding the world in his hand that he had heard her prayer and would not leave it unanswered. Besides that, she had decided and thoroughly believed that the peasants' tears



The Lena

By Yuri Tulin (R.S.F.S.R.)



Twilight on the Dnieper

By Dmitri Shavykin (Ukrainian S.S.R.)

touched God more than any others, for after all, did he not hold in his hands the earth, over which the peasants' hands toiled? Yes, the Lord should be kindest of all to the muzhiks.

This discovery filled the imaginative Mariyka with joy, she turned home-wards feeling herself blessed. But still at the farthest edge of her dreams hovered the image of a horse.

Outside the churchyard Mariyka was overtaken by Father Nikolai. She bowed her head for his blessing and kissed his puffy, doughy hand that smelled of tobacco, incense and money that had lain for many years under the ground—for the muzhiks brought paper money of every possible kind these days.

The village held varying opinions about the good Father, as about everyone else. Under the Hetman he had been against the Germans, now the Reds had come he was against the Bolsheviks. Although the good Father's beard was grey, he had an eye for handsome young women; in addition, he was carried home from church festivals drunk as a lord. But on the other hand he conducted the services with fervour, had a fine ringing voice and did not squeeze the folks too much for church rites—it was his good lady, squat as a beehive, who had the grasping hand.

The good Father stroked his cross, as his habit was, and sighed.

"Are you in trouble, Mariyka? Why did you weep so bitterly in God's house?" He raised his arm in its flowing black sleeve and stroked his white beard. "Is Ivan sick, perhaps? He spends long hours at meetings. But perhaps he is paid well for it?"

"Not a bent copper," said Mariyka, "but isn't it better to go to meetings than swill in the tavern till the third cock-crow? Maybe he'll learn good wisdom from other folks there."

"That may be, too," Father Nikolai agreed reluctantly. "But why were you weeping?"

Mariyka hesitated, wondering whether she had better mention a prayer of that kind. But she could not pretend at such a time, so she told the good Father what she had prayed for. And Father Nikolai promptly poured out such vials of wrath on the woman, one might have thought her modest kerchief hid a pair of horns and her skirt a pair of hoofs. He raised his arms in denunciation and the sleeves of his robe slipped down and dangled from his elbows.

"Stupid animal! Dolt! Blasphemer! God wants prayers like that as much as a cart wants a fifth wheel. If you are too ignorant to know real prayers, don't try to make them up! Did you pray for Trotsky too?"

Mariyka could not penetrate the guile of this question, she answered humbly that she had not prayed for Trotsky because he wasn't the most important one. But no matter how Father Nikolai rated her, she still doubted whether he was right.

After calling Mariyka a blasphemer a few more times and spoiling her festive mood, the priest bore his billowing robe away into the darkness.

With Petlyura's break-through to the south of Letychev, Mariyka for the first time in her life began to take an interest in war news, and went about trying everywhere to find out whether that devil Petlyura was running yet and when there'd be an end of the foul fiend Wrangel. And with the most amazing and contradictory rumours travelling along all the roads, with at least one political and military wiseacre in every house, it was not surprising that Mariyka was run off her feet.

One day she would fly wildly to Miroshnichenko crying out that the Soviet government was not doing anything to calm the peasants, and the next she would slip demurely into a kulak's yard to whisper some secret she had heard from Ivan, or offer to hackle tow for half the usual rate, currying favour in case of need with those who had always had their knife in that man of hers—a man stiff and stubborn as a post. He never seemed to realize that such dour ways would get him into everybody's bad books.

"Why d'you have to hang about the Kombed and the Communists all the time?" she shouted at her husband, when it was known without a shadow of doubt that the Tsar's own brother had arrived on British and French ships and landed in Petrograd and Moscow, or that the Germans had crossed the Rumanian border, seized the German colonies, and were marching on Kiev and all the church bells were ringing there to welcome them.

"What do the papers say, Ivan?" she snapped impatiently another day, eyeing the mysterious print—for she had heard the world revolution had vanquished the Germans and the British. Unfortunately, however, good news of the Revolution came rarely, and tales of Wrangel, the Tsar's family, various generals, Germans, Japanese, British, French, Rumanians and others of their like who either threatened or brandished arms were much more common. So trouble took its seat in Mariyka's eyes, darkening them with worry.

Worrying alone, however, is not enough; a sensible person thinks, ponders, calculates whether it is a moment to go straight ahead, sure of justice and fairness, or a time for guile and cunning. In these sleepless nights and frowning days Mariyka sowed her land with thought instead of grain. At last, after pricing everything—black soil, clay loam and sand loam, she decided to sell two half-dessiatines which had formerly been kulak land, retaining only the land from the estate. When she spoke of this to Ivan, however, he tapped her forehead with a bony finger.

"Has the last screw gone? Or is your head only good for cracking nuts?"

Now—what was the use of talking to a man who could never see farther than his nose and lacked even a grain of peasant shrewdness? So Mariyka decided to act on her own, saying nothing to her husband. Was it her fault that other women had husbands who were some use while she was cursed with a dunderhead?

Just at this time, the Podolye regional food committee got three truckloads of salt for consumption, and the Kombed sent Ivan and Kushnir to Vinnitsa for the Novobugovka share. It would have been hard to find a more simple pair—not a grain would they hide for themselves in pocket or boot-shaft.

When Saturday came and Stepan drove up in style to their gate behind two grey horses, Mariyka quickly cut through a freshly-baked loaf, clapped a piece of butter between the two halves and carefully put it into the knapsack, which already contained cucumbers, onions and apples. Then she handed her husband a pinch of salt in a rag, making sure Stepan saw.

"I don't ask much of you, husband, but at least bring me back from the trucks of salt this little bit you've taken from home."

Ivan laughed and turned his strong, well-built body to Stepan.

"That, brother, is a broad hint."

"Others get something for themselves, you let it all slip past you." Mariyka's voice rose. "Stiff as a post in a fence, won't even stoop for the honey at your feet."

"Oh, I know that honey of yours," laughed Ivan. He could read his wife's thoughts quite easily, but he never ceased to marvel at the eloquence of his persistent better half. He took leave of her without anger, kissed his daughter, went outside and clambered on to the cart with its sacks.

Mariyka wanted to add something more about salt, that he should fill his pockets at least, but felt awkward about it before Kushnir, so she simply made the sign of the cross over his back as Stepan shouted to the horses, and stood by the gate watching the cart disappear.

Now, with Ivan gone, Mariyka had time to think. She moved aimlessly about the yard, then went into the barn. On the left of the threshing-floor a board partition made two stalls. At one time the first had been filled with hay, in the second a small horse with violet eyes had stood. But a poisonous autumn fly had brought disease and the violet eyes dulled with pain. The horse had to be slaughtered and its skin was sold for a song to Suprun Fesuk, who was not afraid of infection.

With Ivan's head always in the clouds they were still without a horse; they had got none either from the estate or from the Galicians when typhus mowed them down as they fled along the muddy spring roads. Well, if her husband was a numbskull, she would have to see about livestock herself.

Like many women, Mariyka laid the blame on her husband for all storms and bad weather, and regarded herself as the prop and stay of the family. Why, he had not even done any autumn ploughing yet! And again she looked with secret hope at the place where the little horse had once stood.

Returning to the cottage, Mariyka put on her best clothes, and titivated for a long time before the mirror. She scolded herself for it, but nevertheless came to the conclusion that she was still a fine-looking woman and her forehead was high because it held brains, as her mocking husband would soon discover. Highly satisfied with herself, she marched with dignity out of the cottage, latched the door and made her way through the village to the meadow where Semyon Poberezhny lived—a distant relative on her mother's side.

Poberezhny's large cottage smelt of water-weeds, fish and moist yarn. He was sitting alone beside the window, mending a fishing net with a shuttle slender as a pikelet.

"Good evening, Uncle Semyon!" Mariyka drew herself up, and the fine lines round her aquiline nose gathered in a smile. "What, all alone? Where's Aunt?"

"Gone with Zakhar to empty the nets."

Poberezhny rose from his chiselled stool and the net, catching on his clothes, rose with him. The thoughtful, high-browed face of the elderly fisherman was clean-cut and fine—the face of a man who had brought in many a boat-load of fish, a man who had saved more than one life, too.

"Aren't you afraid to let her go on the river?"

"She's used to the water. Loves it. And when I married her she wouldn't so much as look at fish."

"She looked at you, though," Mariyka laughed.

"Didn't look at me either. No time." Poberezhny spoke slowly, as though weighing each word. "I saw her once in church and sent the matchmakers right away."

"Didn't waste much time, did you?"

"Yes, it wasn't like today—live together three years, part on the fourth. They need a hand laid on hard in a certain place! But sit down, my dear. Come for fish, I suppose?"

"No. Do you get much nowadays?"

"Eh—call it fishing? Once it used to be real fishing. But the fish—they like peace and quietness too, and where'll you find it these times?"

"That's a true word—no peace for men or fish either," Mariyka agreed. "Folks say Petlyura stunned all the fish in Proskurov." Ever since Petlyura had become a threat to her new land, she was ready to ascribe all evil to him—both what she heard and what she imagined.

"Why does he want to come plaguing us again?" Poberezhny's heavy brows met over his eyes in a quick frown. "The war'd gone a bit away from here, and now he has to bring it back."

Silence fell in the cottage, a silence underlined rather than broken by the tireless chirping of a cricket under the hearth.

"Do you know why I've come to you now, Uncle Semyon?" Mariyka burst out, conquering her last fears of Ivan, but without raising her eyes to the fisherman.

"I will if you tell me."

"Folks say you're selling your black."

"Yes, that's right. I'm taking him to the market tomorrow."

"Is he a good horse?"

"That he is. But now I've got more land, I want a pair, even if they aren't up to much."

"Maybe we could strike a bargain, then?"

"What d'you mean—you want to buy my black?"

"Yes, that's what it is."

"But why are you meddling in a thing of that kind? Why hasn't Ivan come?"

"Well, you see, it's a bit awkward, Uncle Semyon." Mariyka lowered her

voice. "The money we've got, you could put in your eye, as the saying goes, so we decided to sell half a dessiatine and get ourselves a horse."

"So that's it!" Poberezhny thought a moment. "But all the same, why've you come about it, and not Ivan?"

"But how can he, when he's on the Kombed and all?" Mariyka cast prudence to the winds. "What he wants is, if you'll sell him the beast on the quiet, and the land—either take it yourself or sell it, as you think best."

"Yes, it's a tough nut for a man to crack," said the fisherman sympathetically. "He's got land, but he can't scratch it up with his five fingers."

"And there's no end to all we need," Mariyka lamented. "A horse, and a plough, a cultivator too and a harrow—and you don't get far without a cart, either. It makes your head whirl just to think of it all."

"Well, I'm glad to help Ivan if I can. He's a good man." Poberezhny paced thoughtfully from corner to corner. "I can do something with that bit of land, and I'll save up for a horse one way or another. Which half-dessiatine do you think of selling?"

"The one we got from Sichkar. On the clearing."

"And what's your price?"

"A good horse."

"Eh, let mine go, then," said the fisherman with a gesture of decision. "Take the black, and tomorrow we'll see about your land. There's a man I know, just back from Moldavia, came too late to get a portion. He'd be interested. Shake hands on it. Settled."

Mariyka almost jumped for joy but restrained herself in time and preserved her dignity.

"Very well, Uncle Semyon," she said steadily. "But you ought to stand me a drink to seal the bargain." She slammed her hand into the fisherman's.

"What's this—want me to drink with you without your husband?" laughed Poberezhny. Mariyka's eyes sparkled mischievously.

"Why not, if my husband's scared to come!" She already quite believed her own tale, that Ivan had been afraid of coming to Poberezhny.

"No, no, my dear, it's not seemly to drink with a woman." Poberezhny shook his head. Then he took a small limewood tub from the cupboard, went into the store-room and filled it with honey. "We'll seal the bargain with this," he said, handing it to Mariyka.

She stooped, thrust in her little finger and tasted the honey. A pleasant bitterness at once told her what flowers the bees had visited.

"Sunflower?"

"Sunflower, quite fresh. Will you take the horse now, or will Ivan come for it?"

"Him come!" Mariyka pursed her lips affectedly. "All he can do is wear out benches at meetings, while his wife does the worrying."

They left the cottage and opened the small stable. Poberezhny disappeared in a stall, there was jingle of a bit and in a minute he emerged, leading the horse.



"Take him, Mariyka, and may he plough up gold for you." Semyon handed the bridle to the woman, stroked the horse's smooth back and sighed.

A sudden panic shook Mariyka. She saw before her Ivan's laughing eyes—but the laughter changed to anger. . . . Oh well, botheration take him, she thought, shook off the momentary weakness, thanked Poberezhny and walked away, leading the horse.

The next day Semyon sold the half-dessiatine, and Mariyka went out at night to plough with Yesip Kirinyuk, a very taciturn man of middle age. Mariyka was pleased to find such a man to share the work—Yesip did not even ask where she had got the horse or how much she had paid, and never so much as mentioned Ivan. He had his own opinion about the use of words. If a person wanted to say anything he would say it, why wag your tongue uselessly?

He laid a fire under a wild pear-tree, got a few potatoes from a field nearby, laid them on the embers to roast and settled down, listening to the snorting of the horses in the hollow. Mariyka lay down for a while on the cart, already regretting the impatience which had driven her out here for the long autumn night—she could well have left at dawn. Fear visited her too—what if Ivan returned during the night?

Her fears were well grounded—he did return from Vinnitsa, and was considerably surprised and distinctly angry to find only Yugina at home. Jealousy flared up. He wakened the little girl and asked where her mother was.

"She went out with Uncle Yesip to plough." Yugina sleepily pushed the hair off her face with her fists and blinked at the light.

"What's taken her off at night like this?"

"Her horse!" Yugina spluttered with laughter, remembering the airs her mother had put on with that animal.

"Horse?" Ivan could not believe his ears. "Where's she got a horse?"

"Mother swopped half a dessiatine for it," Yugina laughed and ran to the cupboard. "And she brought this honey back, too." She took out the limewood tub and handed it to her father.

Ivan looked at it with hatred and ran frenziedly out into the yard. The very thought was infuriating—that his own wife could make him such a laughing-stock! How that kulak gang would snicker. "Give a ragamuffin land and the

next day he'll squander it, barter it, eat it and drink it—and be back where he was before." He brandished his fists and struck his own head with them.

He saw Kirinyuk and Mariyka from a long way off. They were sitting opposite one another before the golden bush of fire, beneath the thick tree. Ivan descended on them like thunder from a clear sky, snatched up Kirinyuk's lash and brought it down across Mariyka's shoulders as she tried to run.

"He's killing me! Save me, good people!" she screamed, as she fled to the cart. But her husband did not follow her, only said in a voice dull with anger, "If you weren't in your last months, I'd give you such a drubbing the imps in hell'd have nothing left to do. But I'll teach you a lesson that'll keep you from sticking your stupid head into serious matters again. Fancying yourself a grand farmer!"

He went to the hollow, found the black, led it to the fire and to make sure asked Kirinyuk, "Is this the one?"

Kirinyuk nodded.

"A good horse," said Ivan. "I'll take your lash, if you don't mind, Yesip."

"All right. But where are you going?"

"Taking the horse to town. I'll hand it in for the front."

"Oh Heavens! Oh dear God! Save me!" Mariyka wailed from the cart. "Ivan, I beg you—on my knees I beg you—!" And she actually did come running from the darkness and threw herself on her knees, wringing her hands. The firelight flickered over them.

But Ivan had no eyes for his wife. Grasping the horse's mane, he flung a leg over its back, straightened his powerful body and rode across the fields to the road. The beat of hoofs struck Mariyka's heart.

"Well, so there you are," was all that Kirinyuk had to say.

He waited till the last spark had died in the embers, then went in his turn to the hollow, brought out his horse, harnessed it and with a jerk of the head indicated that Mariyka should get into the cart. They drove home like two shadows. Mariyka lacked the strength even to weep or abuse Ivan, so terrible was the destruction of her hopes. She staggered rather than walked into the cottage, lighted the lamp and there, in the middle of the table—like a bitter jeer—lay a pinch of salt in a rag. Her husband had brought exactly what she had asked for.

34

Standing before the joint Yaltushkov Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian People's Republic and the army leaders, the commander-in-chief, Simon Petlyura, in his usual theatrical style, sculptured rather than expounded his plan for capturing both banks of the Dnieper. With a gesture of his two hands he swept the front forward—a front reaching from the Dnestr to Letychev, and a miracle took place. Petlyura's army advanced and the Reds ran; Petlyura entered Kiev, the bells of St. Sophia rang and the citizens met him with bread and salt on embroidered towels.

Rosy dreams clothed in ignorant twaddle brought an angry twist to the massive, resolute face of the Cossack general Yurko Tyutyunik; his lantern jaw thrust forward ominously. Looking at Petlyura, he saw not the compelling eyes of a leader, but the shifting, slanting gleam of a maniac drunk with his own empty words. Tyutyunik writhed at this unholy mixture of military ignorance and utterly unfounded assurance of victory. The prime minister Andri Levitsky and the other ministers could see it, too. Tyutyunik hoped that Petlyura's spate of words would be dammed by the army commander Omelianovich-Pavlenko, but he only raised a hand to his little pointed beard in surprise and said nothing. That wily commander was as good as Petlyura himself at dodging responsibility.

Then Yurko Tyutyunik spoke, and he did not mince matters. When he had finished Petlyura's plan had burst like a bubble risen from a bog, leaving nothing but a bad smell. Tyutyunik presented his own plan of attack, and proposed that a plan for retreat be worked out together with it—just in case. War is war, it sometimes brings surprises. A heated argument sprang up around this suggestion; neither the ministers nor the Head Ataman wanted to hear anything about retreat—you don't need any plan for running away.

When the angry Tyutyunik had crammed on his tall black hat and returned to his headquarters, and the ministers, guarded by soldiers, had gone in the darkness to their rooms in the brick house belonging to the manager of the Yaltushkov sugar refinery, somebody started a rumour that the Cossack general intended to arrest the "government of the Ukrainian People's Republic." The frightened ministers huddled together in one room, awaiting their fate. But nobody came to arrest them, and in the morning Tyutyunik himself was considerably surprised to find the whole "Ukrainian government" in such cramped quarters. Somebody said they had been discussing the date for the offensive—although in reality their minds had been much more exercised by the question of how they could get away on a lorry from Yaltushkov to Kamenets-Podolsk.

The general offensive along the whole front was fixed for the twelfth of November. But on the eleventh at dawn the bugles of the Fourteenth Soviet Army sounded near Staraya Murafa. The Eighth Cavalry Division dealt the first blow at Petlyura's army. It had orders to break through the front and cut off the cavalry stationed near Mogilyov-Podolsky.

The raid of the Eighth Division started well. Right at the beginning, in the village of Shestakovka, the farmers whom Petlyura had forcibly mobilized a short time before flung down their weapons and surrendered. While the Eighth Division was capturing Ivashkovka, Luchinets and Kukavka, the Second Brigade made a break-through near Mogilyov and after a fierce fight with Florov's cavalry drove into the town. Petlyura's southern group retreated, unable to hold out against the Fourteenth Army, and part of them crossed the Dnestr to Rumania. For a few days Petlyura had better success in the north, where Yakovlev's division captured Lityn, and General Peremykin's division moved from Derazhna on Zhmerinka. But by the sixteenth of November both divisions were falling back, helped along by repeated blows from the Red Cossacks.

Petlyura's candle was indeed burning at both ends. So the Head Ataman threw in his final reserves—his last ten thousand riflemen; but it was not to gain a victory he used them, it was to cover with their bodies the transport over the Zbruch of the ministers' property and the treasury. Petlyura and all his ministers except Arkhipenko ran away from their own troops to that part of the Ukrainian soil which they had given to Pilsudski. And the Polish Buonaparte did not forget the services of the Corsican from Kobelyats; Pilsudski presented Petlyura with a capital—the little town of Tarnov. There all the Head Ataman's state officials huddled in the Hotel Bristol—the ministries, the ambassadors, the military headquarters and their offices, the printshop and the Head Ataman himself.

It was in the Hotel Bristol, where kitchen smells filled every room, that the Head Ataman, perhaps for the first time, realized how ephemeral his power was. Petlyura summoned all his officials and suite and at an inter-party conference announced with all the melodrama of a barn-stormer an "act of unequalled historical importance": he, the Head Ataman, had signed his resignation.

He hoped that the conference would implore him with tears to retain his powers. But the conference, demoralized by all that had happened, received the pronouncement in silence.

This shook Petlyura more than his defeats at the front. His eyes begged, pleaded for somebody, just one person, to cry out that the Ukraine could not exist without its Head Ataman. But the eyes he met were dead, the spirit behind them speechless, with no faith left in him. In a gust of rage he made to turn and leave the moribund hall, but self-pity and indignation at the ingratitude of his associates made him pour out another improvised hysterical speech after which he most unexpectedly tore up his resignation—probably deciding in the end that even a hotel kingdom was better than none.

On the twenty-first of November Petlyura's last soldiers and supply columns, covered by Tyutyunik's troops, fled across the bridge to the right bank of the Zbruch. Nobody was in command of the crossing. On the bridge utter confusion reigned. Carts collided and their wheels locked, cursing riders and infantry fought their way through with flailing fists, carts hurtled down into the water and the screams of dying horses were unheeded by men half crazed. The terror of Kotovsky had stripped the last reason from the remnants of Petlyura's forces and only the bravest smashed their weapons on the bank so that they should not fall into the hands of the Poles, and abandoning the valuables they were convoying, made their way with empty hands to their allies of yesterday. These stripped them without ceremony of everything of value, even watches from their wrists and coats from their backs if these were not too badly worn.

Kotovsky's brigade was near Volochisk and racing to the Zbruch when Lieutenant-Colonel Pogiba pushed his way through the remnants of the savage Black Shlyk and Yellow Shlyk divisions into the seething mass of bodies on the bridge, still wearing his peasant coat. More than once he was nearly thrown into the cold water, already misted with dusk, but he clutched frantically at the nearest men and the human torrent finally carried him over to

the farther bank. At last, it seemed, he could draw breath—but no, before he had time to turn round a broad, squat fellow with a blue nose and cat's whiskers rushed at him. Pogiba had no weapons, but the fellow made a grab at his wrist to pull off his wedding ring. Pogiba unhesitatingly delivered a short punch at the spot where whiskers and nose met; the robber yelled and staggered back and Pogiba hastened away into the darkness, towards the sound of rattling arms and the babel of curses from the allies.

After a long and harassing time in Tarnopol, Pogiba and five thousand others found themselves in the dirty Vadovets camp, set up by the Austrians for Russian prisoners-of-war. And there Polish commandants proceeded by means of hunger, cold and brutality to break the spirit of soldiers who were ready to go into the jaws of hell itself if only they could get past the barbed wire of the half-ruined camp.

Pea soup with worms curled into rings floating on top and stinking horse-flesh caused an uproar in the camp, put down at once by the weapons of allies. It was more difficult, however, to put down stomach troubles, itch and hideous ulcers. Thousands of men, suffering for the actions of others, longed desperately for their Ukraine; even the names of towns and villages sounded to them as sweet as an Easter hymn. Yesterday's warriors, in caps of twisted straw, drifted like shadows about the camp, cursing themselves and the Head Ataman—who never once condescended to leave his residence at the Hotel Bristol and come to see how his unfortunate followers were faring.

Lieutenant-Colonel Pogiba, having lost all hope of salvation by Petlyura or his distinguished entourage, watched with horror the dying convulsions of Ataman's army, fearing one thing only—to sink to the point when life loses all value. So long as he still possessed a few small valuables, he bartered them for food and did his best not to be eaten alive by lice. But when he slipped his wedding ring, his last treasure, from a thin finger, then indeed he knew that life lay behind him, there was nothing more to strive for.

35

Poplars emerged from the silvery mists together with the early morning sun. Hoar-frost, tinged with pink, melted on the cracked bark, and soon a faint steam rose from it, like warm breath. The last leaves hung from the branches like golden ear-rings, but the grass beneath was still white, crossed by the dark tracks of hares.

Danilo Pidoprigora, carrying a warmly-wrapped Petrik, strolled to the edge of the village where it scattered its last white cottages along the edge of the woods. There were fewer crosses by the wells and at crossroads, typhus had left the villages and night raiders were rare. After Petlyura's final defeat the authorities had turned their full attention to the atamans and batkos who had not yet surrendered. Today, too, machine-guns rattled somewhere, and riderless horses galloped right up to the Beryozov forests.

"Mum-mum-mum-mum! Mum-mum-mum!" shouted Petrik and brandished his arms. He had seen his mother among the trees.

"Well, have you missed me, baby?" Galya took the boy from his father, and Petrik immediately sought the breast—more from force of habit than anything else, for he was already weaned.

The woodland path breathed and rustled with fallen leaves, leading them on, as in a fairy-tale, to enchanted distances where shafts of sunlight filled with dancing motes lanced through the trees down to the spell-bound glade. Petrik was once more passed to his father while Galya, pushing back the heavy braids that fell from under her kerchief, went further among the trees. She carefully broke off a branch heavy with ripe rose-hips, and gave a cry.

"Danilo—come here!"

He went to her and stopped in surprise beside a thick tree-stump. Between its jutting roots two snow-drops hung their small bell-like heads. Why had these heralds of spring suddenly decided to flower in autumn, why could they not wait for their misty March?

Galya was delighted with them, but her lingering faith in omens brought doubts—was it a good sign, this autumn flowering?

"Flowers are always a good sign, you can be certain of that," her husband reassured her. "It means that this autumn is the beginning of our spring."

The path brought them to a pond, and there Vasilinka came running to meet them from the small dam, her plaits waving as she ran. It was only now Danilo noticed that his niece's mouth had a sad droop and her dark-grey eyes, although sparkling with joy at this meeting, were not very gay in repose. . . . That comes from living in the woods, he thought as he handed Petrik to the girl.

"Petrik, Petrik! Oh, my wee one," she crooned over him, tearing her attention away from him long enough to say that her mother had gone to church and her father had just taken out some honeycombs and was cutting them up, because very soon Red Armymen wounded in the fight against bandits would be coming along the road and he wanted to have something to offer them even if it was only honey.

Inside the cottage Miron, in his clean linen shirt, stood before the table under the embroidered picture of the Virgin, carefully cutting up honeycomb and laying the pieces in a big wooden bowl. Threads of honey gleamed on his beard and a single bee crawled drowsily over it. Danilo liked his brother's face much more now than he had some days before. It had changed. That was because the last shadow of fear had left it, it was not without cause he had been so happy to hear that Petlyura had run away abroad—he would have a long way to go before he could reach Miron's land.

After breakfasting, they all went out to the old highway, where a light breeze raised miniature whirls of lime leaves. Here and there people stood waiting, holding bowls of food, well-browned buns, apples, bread and packages of tobacco. The women spoke in pitying tones, the men sagely told one another that the robbing bastards had been smashed to pieces Verbka way. A cluster of

children came running round the bend in the distance and raced through the village yelling, "They're coming! Coming!"

Through the trees the first horsemen appeared, followed by high wagons and creaking peasant carts on which the wounded men were laid. Women sighed, looking at the sad procession. The crowd closed in on the carts.

"Take a little honey, son."

"Here's some white bread, it's fresh and nice, try to eat a little. . . ."

Simple country gifts were laid on the straw. A young lad with a bandaged arm took a piece of fragrant honeycomb from Galya with a smile.

"Thank you, pretty lass, thank you, Goldilocks! May you find a good husband who isn't jealous."

Galya blushed and laughed. She gave honey to another man, and felt her husband tug at her sleeve. She glanced up at his fixed eyes, followed their direction and saw a familiar face. Dark hair waved over a high forehead, tanned cheeks were pale and sunken, the straight nose was pinched and the eyes closed in the tension of pain. It was Grigori Nechuiviter. With a moan Galya ran to the cart and Grigori, as though hearing it, opened his eyes with difficulty for a moment. But he saw nothing, neither his first love nor his successful rival. With shaking hands Galya tore off the tender snow-drops from her jacket and laid them on his breast, like two drops of pure, maternal love for a brave man. And Danilo put his arm round his wife as though fearing that she would leave him. "So we've met, Grigori," he whispered with grey lips. "We've met again."

The cart moved on, and as it went drops of blood fell slowly from it.

A handsome, swarthy, hook-nosed rider clothed in leather from head to foot, came pacing slowly, immersed in sombre thoughts. As the lovely, golden-haired woman bent over Nechuiviter a sarcastic smile flickered for an instant on his face, but vanished at once. That night he had lost the right to laugh at Nechuiviter, as he had laughed at him a few days before for his romanticism, for spending his time on the case of some sotnik or other of Petlyura's. That night something dreadful had happened. When the bandits succeeded in cutting through the column and Kulnitsky saw the dead, moonlit gleam of two sabres over Nechuiviter's head, he gasped and fled at top speed into the forest. From there he saw bandits and riderless horses fleeing, and saw Nechuiviter's head sink on to his horse's neck. Then Kulnitsky rushed to help him. He arrived before the Red Armymen, but Nechuiviter turned away from him as from a monster, and collapsed in the men's arms.

Will he live? thought Kulnitsky. Better die than live with such wounds. He looked commiseratingly at Nechuiviter, but felt his sympathy being pushed into the background by mean, miserable apprehension. Although after all, it was not such a dreadful crime to have run into the woods for a few minutes. Who could say that he had not been fighting bandits there, just as Nechuiviter had among the bushes at the edge? Such an argument could be characterised as base, but not by such as he. After all, why all this self-castigation? Better plan the report on the defeat dealt the bandits and decide how much should be said about

Nechuiviter and how much about himself. . . . Although that too depended, in the final analysis, on whether Nechuiviter lived or not.

When the mournful procession had left the village, Ivan Bondar came up to Miroshnichenko. Sorrow and an irrepressible smile fought for supremacy on his face.

"Good luck to 'em," he said with a jerk of his head towards the carts. "And now, Svirid, I want you to come home with me."

"Why, what's happened?"

"I've got a son!"

Miroshnichenko flinched, but mastered himself at once.

"May he grow up a joy to his parents and all good folks. When was he born?"

"Yesterday. Mariyka wants you to be the first to drink his health with us."

"The mother must be obeyed," Miroshnichenko agreed, feeling the pain gathering under his eyelids.

Yugina and the midwife were busy in the Bondar cottage; the midwife was just placing a piece of iron in the mother's bed so that all trouble from an evil eye should go into the metal instead of the infant.

Miroshnichenko smiled at this occult precaution, and the weak, haggard Mariyka caught his smile.

"Nothing to laugh at, even if you are a Communist," she snapped.

Ivan got out the vodka and filled two glasses, while Miroshnichenko stooped over the wrinkled little face in the cradle.

"Well, what do you think of him?" asked Mariyka apprehensively.

"A beautiful baby! Just like his father, and his nose is as pretty as though it was carved," answered Miroshnichenko, and Mariyka let out a sigh of relief. She had been afraid the nostrils were too wide.

"Your good health, Mariyka, and the children's!" Miroshnichenko tipped up his glass, and felt in his pocket for a coin to cut the first tooth on; but his pocket was empty.

"Never mind, Svirid, you'll come to rock him," said Mariyka consolingly.

"And glad to," he agreed. "And I'll make your son a present of Levko's dessiatine of land."

"Oh no, Svirid, you mustn't do that," Mariyka protested, almost frightened at such a gift. "Why, it's real rich land!"

"Let the child's portion go to a child," Miroshnichenko answered, and went quickly out of the house, unable to keep his tears back any longer. His eyes seemed to have got weak since the death of Levko and Nastenka.

36

Silently they returned through the woods, as though coming from a funeral; silently they bore the heavy load of memory and experience. Only that morning their thoughts had floated as lightly as the little clouds borne through the sky on the sun's rays, now they lay like ice on the heart. The drops of blood falling from the cart seared their minds and weighted their feet. It is always

a dreadful moment when one realizes that one's life has been bought with blood—of a mother, or a father worked to death, or an unknown friend who is braver, better than oneself. Many try not to think about it, as though it were none of their business, and from this evasion they lose dignity and stature in the eyes of others and their own.

Danilo flayed himself as he held sleepy little Petrik close to him; he sent thoughts of deep gratitude along that distant road on which the cart bearing Nechuiviter was probably still swaying and creaking. But Galya's thoughts plunged deeply into past years as into the floodwaters of spring. Half-forgotten fragments of early youth, flashes of her first emotions floated up and sparkled in her mind like the frost on the birches that bordered the road. Again she breathed the air of those years when her heart had turned to Nechuiviter, she felt doubly guilty towards him and involuntarily pictured what her life would have been had Danilo not crossed her path. At this moment she would have been beating her head against the side of the cart, falling on her knees and praying Heaven and earth to preserve the life of her husband. But probably there was somebody else to weep over Grigori. If only he recovered! Today for the first time Danilo's face receded mistily from Galya's eyes; and now she carried not one load of guilt, but two—but this must be guessed by nobody. Dear God, why is the heart made so strangely?

The birches by the road scattered cold dew from their tiny sleeping buds and her heart wept invisible tears; yet nevertheless a smile touched the mother's sad mouth when Petrik awakened and cried in his father's arms. And she took the child and held him closely to her as a shield against all troubles.

But when Petrik was settled for the night and Danilo had at last fallen into a restless sleep, she wept bitterly for Grigori and for her own youth which had drifted, it might well be, along the wrong path. When her husband stirred, however, she bit her lips and forced herself to silence, lying wakeful until a misty golden halo surrounded the stars. Then Petrik woke up and cried; it was time to rise and begin another day filled with new cares and new thoughts.

She was already preparing breakfast when Danilo awoke; he smiled sleepily at her, but then frowned, for beneath his wife's eyes he saw dark shadows. They told him more than any words, and gave rise to a vague alarm. His heart sank, but he tried unselfishly to drive away his trouble by extra attention to Galya. He knew her better than she knew herself, he realized that in all essentials his wife was still a shy girl, and feared the moment when tender youth would give place to maturity. It is only in early years one can believe the beloved will never alter or change. She, like a man, has hours when her spirit lies lost and crushed, has days of a secret attraction and it may be more.

Danilo, therefore, was not surprised to see his wife come resolutely to him after lessons, her clear eyes holding a shadow of pain.

"Danilo, one of us ought to go to see Grigori, either you or I. He may be all alone with nobody even to give him a cup of water."

"I've been thinking about that, too. You go, Galya." He forced the words from him.

At first she was pleased, then hesitated. "Perhaps it would be better if you went?"

"No, no, Galya, you're a woman, after all."

"It was I who spoke of it, and now I'm afraid, somehow." She looked trustfully at her husband.

"Nothing to be afraid of in doing a kind deed." There was a smile on his face, but a shadow in his heart.

The last drops of Galya's courage drained away as she stood before the iron gates of the hospital, and it took all her determination not to think of what might happen to Grigori.

Chipped stone steps led to a damp waiting room smelling strongly of iodine-form and carbolic. A thin, flat-chested nurse, busy rolling old, washed bandages, cast an indifferent glance at the visitor.

"Who do you want?"

"I want to see Grigori Nechuiviter."

"I'm sorry, you can't." The nurse gave her a pitying look.

"Why not?" sighed Galya, guessing that this was a bad sign.

"He's very seriously wounded. He needs absolute quiet. Are you a relation?"

"I? . . . I'm—his wife," burst suddenly from Galya.

"His wife?" The nurse was startled and embarrassed by this. The yellowish, much-washed bandage fell from her cracked fingers, but without even stopping to pick it up she opened an inner door and disappeared. Soon an elderly woman, a doctor, appeared in the waiting room. She greeted Galya, smiling with tired but steady eyes.

"So young, and already a—wife?"

Galya felt beneath the final word the shadow of another—the word "widow."

"Tell me how he is."

"There is hope. He's lost a lot of blood. But there's still hope. I'll let you see him for just a second. Only I must ask you to control yourself and not start crying. After all, you're the wife of Nechuiviter himself," she added, making it plain that this name meant a great deal.

In the semi-darkness of the corridor people moved like shadows, haggard with wounds and sickness, tapping home-made crutches that supported mutilated young bodies.

The doctor opened the last door and Galya recognized Grigori, despite the sharpened nose and face yellow with pain; but his prone, flattened body was new to her, so was his voice still muttering fragments of orders. Swallowing her tears, she went slowly to stand at the head of his bed. The package of buns she had brought fell with a dull thud, but she did not stoop to pick it up, her eyes were fixed on the face of her first love. Grigori would at this moment have entered her heart and taken complete possession, had it not been for her child. But she felt in every fibre of her being that youth was gone, and what was lost had vanished forever. And it may be for this reason that in her feeling for

Grigori there was a mingling of maternal sorrow, although she was younger than he was.

She did not know how long she stood by Grigori, stifling her sobs, before somebody touched her shoulder. She glanced round and saw a handsome, hook-nosed man clothed in leather from head to foot.

"Don't grieve so, don't worry so badly," he tried to calm her, and his leather sleeve creaked as he stroked her shoulder. He led her gently into the courtyard, insistently seeking her tear-filled eyes.

"If I can help you in any way, I'll always be glad to do all I can. . . . I'm Grigori's friend, Kulnitsky. . . . But I didn't know he had a wife."

"I'm not his wife," she sighed, and wiped her eyes with the corner of her kerchief.

"Not his wife?" he repeated in surprise, for the first time he took a good look at her and saw that she was pretty. Galya, stammering, told him how Nechuiviter had helped to get her husband released.

There may be some love affair behind all this, was the first mean thought that entered his head. He took another look at Galya and decided that a girl as pretty as that was worth a little trouble. Galya caught his glance, shivered and said she must go.

"Are you on foot?"

"Yes."

"Now that's real—friendship." He almost said "love," but stopped himself in time. "I'll give you a lift in my britchka."

"Oh, there's no need—thank you," cried Galya, alarmed, and set off quickly.

He stood looking after her, thinking what a pity it was that such an attractive piece should have been snapped up by someone else. Then he turned to his britchka, captured from the bandits and still bearing the words "I'll catch the devil himself" in front, and "The devil himself can't catch me" on the back. They seemed to mock him, reminding him of his momentary cowardice which could have been left behind and forgotten if only Nechuiviter had lain beneath the sod.

37

The sun gleamed greasily through dirty-looking clouds. In the morning sleet had fallen, and now it was churned into mud by worn-out, splitting boots and wooden shoes. Topping such footwear and such rags, the dirty shlyks, once brightly coloured, were a bitter mockery. All that had beckoned enticingly yesterday was now faded and stained, the men called their shlyks bags for curds and sang bitter little songs about their own fate.

*Here we are, willy-nilly,
Sold ourselves for stinking skilly*

But today there was a languid animation in the Vadovets camp, for envoys were to come from the "Ukrainian insurgents" who had not laid down their

arms. The wildest rumours stirred men who had become shadows, gave them a grain of hope that they might even return to the Ukraine or at least hear the truth about it. For that truth had so far been flooded and drowned in the most fantastic lies. Not only was all the land as far as the Dnieper, except for Kiev itself, in the hands of the atamans, who were only waiting for Petlyura's arrival in order to capture Kiev too—the Bolsheviks had confessed the error of their ways, they admitted they ought never to have taken power and now were only wondering to whom they could relinquish it. Of course Petlyura was the proper person, for the Entente was going to recognize him as the ruler of the Ukraine any moment.

Pogiba, sick and morose, listened to this twaddle and his sixth sense told him it all came from the agents of the Head Ataman. Petlyura himself was afraid to risk his own person in the camp, he feared the anger of the tormented men, so he sent his lackeys who used their last drop of ingenuity and imagination to justify and laud their master at the Bristol. Pogiba did not trouble to go and meet the envoys, he knew from whom they came and had no hope of hearing anything of interest. For that matter, the men in the next bunks would tell him all about it.

When all had left the barrack, he huddled his peasant coat round him, longing only for one thing—to get warm and perhaps find a happier life in dreams. But his first dreams only brought added misery. He dreamed that the camp commandant, who had been a colonel under the tsar, was setting up additional barbed wire round the camp, and Petlyura and Vyshivanny had come to help him. For some reason they had got the idea that the camp must be contained in a barbed wire net, and Pogiba with horror watched the sky itself being divided into even squares by the strands. In one of these squares a small wintery sun quivered like a trapped moth. But all of a sudden a wonderful smell of food came to him, and forgetting the sun he tore open a door. It admitted him into a room where a table groaned under its load of food and wine. Pogiba rushed to the table, but just at that moment he was awakened by a hubbub of voices. It was the prisoners and the envoys entering the barrack. Pogiba rose to sit hunched on his bed, but the next moment he almost cried out. For by the door he saw the rotund form of Barabolya and the fastidiously disgusted face of Yevsei Golovan, whose stomach was turned by what he had seen in the camp.

"God in Heaven, it's you, Lieutenant-Colonel!" cried Barabolya. He flung out his arms and with unfeigned joy ran to Pogiba, embraced him and wiped away an invisible tear with a woman's handkerchief.

"Stylization," mocked Yevsei Golovan, looking at Barabolya's dry eyes, and greeted his old friend. "How do, how do, brother. I didn't expect to find you in this man mincing machine."

"The flower of the nation in stinking camps," cried Barabolya, fussing around Pogiba. "But we'll soon have you out of here. All of you!" he added, turning to the inhabitants of the barrack. "The Head Ataman is preparing a new

campaign. And you will return under his banner to your quiet waters and clear dawns!"

"Idealism," grunted Golovan through his moustache, and went off to find the camp commandant.

Soon afterwards two tall horses with bells jingling on their harness took Pogiba, Barabolya and Golovan to Krakow. Golovan unceremoniously seated the lieutenant-colonel beside the driver, he was afraid the starving camp lice might transfer themselves to his own scented underwear, and this brusque action pleased Barabolya—let the fine lieutenant-colonel feel that he was now dependent upon them. And Pogiba did feel it. In Krakow Barabolya got him clothes and boots, took him to the bath-house and the barber, and finally with a giggle asked where he would like to sup—in a restaurant or at a cosy little house where there were plenty of pretty girls who weren't shy.

"The girls here are mustard," and he smacked his thick lips. "They'd liven the dead."

"I'm worse than dead, now," answered Pogiba. "I don't want any girls."

"I understand—the camp, and the bad food there." Barabolya shook his head sympathetically. "Well, never mind, in a few days you'll be a real Cossack again."

Pogiba's face suddenly lightened a little and his eyes seemed to pierce the darkness which those months had brought to them.

"By the way, Denis Ivanovich, you haven't forgotten your water-sprite?"

"Mariana?" The agent's well-fed face glistened with self-satisfaction.

"Mariana, the mysterious water-sprite."

"Everything in woman is a mystery, but it all has but one answer—pregnancy. Thus spake Zarathustra," Barabolya declaimed, and poured out a chain of "he-he's."

"I hope that hasn't happened to the water-sprite?" Pogiba's gaze dulled.

"It's just what has happened," and Barabolya giggled again.

"Is that really true?"

"I may lie when I'm talking to women, but talking about them I tell only the truth." Barabolya was delighted with his own wit. "We'll soon go back to the Ukraine, and you'll see our water-sprite for yourself." He did not even ask whether Pogiba was willing to become a spy.

"Shall we go alone?"

"For the present—yes, but you'll be given a mandate by the Head Ataman. Only don't get the idea of going to Yurko Tyutyunik. At the congress of generals in Tarnov he was elected commander of the partisan rebel headquarters. But the Head Ataman doesn't trust him, and that enmity can do you harm."

"Very well," Pogiba concurred; he had more faith in Tyutyunik than in Petlyura, but it was all one to him. The camp had crushed his former convictions. He understood that now he could serve not only Petlyura, but Barabolya who had fed and clothed him.

The winter storage cellar was quiet and mysterious, smelling of honey and the herbs which bees love. Old Goritsvit embraced a hive with both arms, brought his ear close and talked to the bees inside. Dmitro listened, interested and a little frightened, while Grandad talked to the bees as though they were people. He knew magic words which helped them to swarm earlier and gather large quantities of fine honey. In the village they called Grandad a wizard, but that was all lies. Grandad went to church on Sundays and said the bees were the Virgin's tears and honey was God's dew that the mist carried from one place to another. And the winged workers toiled over all the flowers except wormwood and rye. Wormwood concealed its honey, while rye was sweeter than honey for the tiller of the soil.

Grandad ended his quiet conversation and turned to Dmitro.

"Take that hive, child, and put it out for a while in the yard."

"But won't it kill the bees? It's still cold."

"With a lazy bee-keeper they'll die in the warm too. More of them die at this time than in all the rest of the year put together. But if we give 'em a bath of sunshine, then they get well."

Holding their breath, they carried the first hives out into the yard. The snow sparkled blindingly in the sunshine, icicles hung from the edge of the roof, shedding blue drops, and a yellow bunting perched on a lilac bush chirruped merrily. The white clouds of spring floated through the sky, and the quivering shadows under the trees were blue and violet.

Grandad's yard was cleared of snow and strewn with dry rushes so that the bees, falling heavily on the ground, should not catch cold. It was strange to see the warm cloud pour out of the openings of the hives and rise in the air to bathe in the sunshine even though the snow lay all around.

Grandad's old face lightened, he smoothed down his beard and with narrowed eyes turned his kindly smile to the March sunshine. People stopped by the gate, looking in surprise at the hives, the bees and the old man. Dmitro heard whispers: "He's weaving spells!"

The bees flew about and returned to their homes. Grandad and Dmitro carefully carried them back to the cellar—let the hives stay there a couple of weeks more, then they could come out for good and stand in some sheltered spot. And old Goritsvit would go round them all with newly-baked bread, sprinkle them with holy water, using as a sprinkler the unthreshed wheat that had stood under the icons since Christmas, and again speak mystic words, that the bees should not fly from their hives but bring to them honey and wax.

"Well, child, we've been good to the bees, now we can think of ourselves."

The old man stopped on the threshold as though wondering what to begin with.

Dmitro liked working with his grandfather, gladly learned his secret lore and ate with zest all the strangely flavoured food the old man prepared. The

lad had grown during the winter, he was quieter and no longer called his father at night. He slept soundly and knew nothing of it when his grandfather sat for a long time by his bed as dawn broke.

Day by day the son became more like the father. Grandad, who had never spared Timofi in the matter of work, allowed his grandson to sleep right up to sunrise and was angry with Dokia when she fetched him home too soon.

"But Dad, if you're so fond of Dmitro, why won't you come and live with us?" the widow urged time and again. But that only made the old man angry.

"I see myself coming! Fill my sack and come tomorrow! And then soon's I say a word ye don't like—then the sparks fly! I know what women are, had one of my own and you're all tarred wi' the same brush. And I've a sharp tongue."

"Everyone knows that," smiled Dokia.

"Old Nick take 'em! There's those, if you don't give 'em a nip, ye'll never move 'em. Not thinking of getting married, are ye?"

"What an ideal!" cried Dokia, flushing up to the point of tears.

"There, ye see, angry already. . . . Ye're a young woman yet."

"And were I but seventeen, were I widowed the next day after my wedding, still I'd not look at another."

"Timofi knew what he was doing when he married you." Grandad shook his white beard and turned away so that the widow should not see that his own eyes were not always dry.

Now the old man watched admiringly as Dmitro dovetailed a board—good that he had a bit of time now to enjoy watching.

"It'll be time for ploughing before we can turn round."

"Soon's the mist rises, time for the fields," the lad answered staidly, without stopping his work.

"Have you decided what you'll sow, and where?"

"Of course. Wheat and oats in Kadibka, peas and buckwheat on the main clearing. The soil's sandy, but buckwheat ought to come up."

A good farmer, thought the old man after a mental survey, but he only nodded. He did not believe in too much praise.

The forest became misty with dusk, the clouds darkened and seemed to rest on the tree-tops. The music of falling drops ceased. After supper Dmitro said good-bye to his grandfather and turned his steps home—he had been away long enough. Ice crackled under his feet, the rough snow crunched, and the moon gleamed dully on pools covered with a thin frozen skin. The white cottages looked like plump geese waiting to spread their wings and fly to meet a new spring.

From a neighbouring street the merry voices of girls rang out in a teasing song,

*At the door, near the well,
Pretty maids wove a spell,
Buried by the pathway*

*A pot of porridge flavoured well.
They buried it and marked the spot,
Smoothed it down with laughter gay
And waited for their magic pot
To bring a handsome lad that way.*

With the last words there came a burst of laughter and the girls fled—for a young fellow actually had appeared, and Podolye way lads and girls are not allowed to meet anywhere but inside the houses.

A handful of girls came running across the road, one of them noticed Dmitro, cried "Oh—a lad!" and they all vanished squealing behind the fences.

Chattering magpies, thought Dmitro with a smile. He was pleased to have been taken for a grown youth.

Stepan Kushnir came gaily out of Olga Pidoprigora's yard. He strode up to Dmitro and wrung the lad's hand.

"How do, Dmitro! My word, how you've grown—you're quite a young man now!"

"Young man, indeed," mumbled Dmitro, highly embarrassed.

"And I've had grand luck!" Kushnir's face glowed. "I'm going to marry Olga. What's the sense of her pining alone?" He jerked his head towards the house. "Will you come to the wedding? This is an invitation. Will you come?"

"I'll come all right."

"It's a bit late for me, I know that, but there wasn't any time for getting married with the war on. And I'll find none better than Olga if I hunt the world," he added confidentially, as though Dmitro were a man of his own age. "A good thing the war's over, now we can live in peace. Your turn soon, lad! And remember, it's the best time in a man's life, when he's in love."

That brought all the blood in Dmitro's body to his hot face. Love—how much he had heard of it, in song and story. But what was it, really? He looked up at the gleaming stars and listened to the distant singing with eager expectation. And that song of spring seemed to come close to him, like the eyes of a maid shining on him from the darkness of the March night.

Translated by Eve Manning

Illustrations by David Khaikin



Winter Oak

THE narrow path from Uvarovka village to the school had been completely covered with snow during the night and only the play of light and shadow on its uneven surface revealed its course. The young school-teacher trod on cautiously, ready to draw back her foot at once if the shadows proved misleading.

It was no more than half a kilometre to the school. The teacher had merely tied a woollen kerchief round her head and thrown her short fur-coat over her shoulders without bothering to put her arms in the sleeves. The cold was fierce, however, and the fitful gusts of wind showered her with snow from head to foot. But the twenty-four-year-old teacher did not mind it. She even enjoyed the stinging sensation in her cheeks and the momentary cold touch of the wind. Averting her face from the gusts of wind she was amused to see the small imprints her pointed overshoes left behind, like the tracks of some forest creature.

The fresh, sunlit January morning filled her with happy thoughts. She had come here only two years ago, straight from college, and already she was considered the district's best teacher of Russian. In Uvarovka itself, in Kuzminki,

in Black Gully village, in the peat settlement and at the stud farm, everywhere they knew her, and called her Anna Vasilyevna, adding the patronimic to show their respect.

The sun rose over the serrated outline of the distant woods and the long shadows on the snow grew a deeper blue, making far-away objects merge with those nearby—the top of the church belfry reached up to the porch of the village Soviet, the pines across the river came to the slope of the nearest bank, the wind-gauge at the school meteorological station kept turning in the middle of the field, right at Anna's feet.

A man was coming across the field. "What if he won't step off the path?" speculated Anna. The path was too narrow for two people but stepping aside meant sinking knee-deep into the snow. She knew, of course, that there was not a man in the district who would not go out of his way to let the Uvarovka school-teacher pass.

As they drew nearer Anna recognized the man as Frolov, one of the workers at the stud farm.

"Good morning, Anna Vasilyevna," said Frolov and raised his fur hat over his shapely, short-cropped head.

"Now, now, put that hat on! What an idea, in this cold!"

Probably Frolov had no intention of keeping his hat off, but after the teacher's words he took his time about putting it on again. A short sheepskin coat fitted his trim, muscular body. In one hand he held a thin, snake-like whip, which he kept smacking against his high felt boots.

"How does my Lyosha behave? Up to any mischief?" he asked conversationally.

"All children are up to mischief, it's quite normal so long as they don't overdo it," replied Anna, savouring her pedagogical wisdom.

Frolov smiled.

"No fear *him* overdoing it. He's a quiet one, takes after his father."

He stepped off the path and immediately sank into the snow up to his knees. That made him look no taller than a twelve-year-old boy. Anna nodded to him graciously and hurried on.

The school, a two-storeyed brick building, with its wide, frost-painted windows stood well off the highway, behind a low fence. In the morning light its walls threw a reddish tint on the surrounding snow. Children from all over the district came to it—from nearby villages, from the stud farm, the oil workers' sanatorium and even the far-off peat settlement. Caps, kerchiefs, hats, hoods, and bonnets flocked to the school along the highway in both directions.

"Good morning, Anna Vasilyevna!"

From some the familiar greeting sounded in clear and ringing voices, from others it was muffled and barely audible, coming through thick scarves and shawls that swathed the young faces up to the eyes.

Anna's first lesson was to the twelve- and thirteen-year-olds in five-A form. She entered the class-room as the last peal of the bell was announcing the beginning of the lessons. The children rose, greeted her and sat down at their desks.

But it took some time for them to quiet down. Desk tops banged, benches creaked, somebody sighed heavily, evidently unwilling to switch off the carefree morning mood.

"We shall continue to study parts of speech today."

Now they became perfectly quiet. The sounds of a lorry slowly rumbling on along the slippery highway could be heard distinctly in the room.

Anna remembered how nervous she had been about this lesson last year. She had kept repeating to herself, like a schoolgirl before an exam, the textbook definition of a noun. And how foolishly afraid she had been that they would not understand!

She smiled at those memories, adjusted a pin in her fluffy abundant hair and, sensing confidence coursing like blood itself through her body, she began speaking in an even, calm voice:

"A noun is the word that tells the name of a subject—that is, a person, thing, or quality. A subject in grammar is anything about which you can ask the question: what is it? or, who is it? For instance: Who is it?—a pupil. What is it?—a book."

"May I come in?"

A small figure in big battered felt boots covered with melting snow-flakes, stood in the open doorway. The round wind-reddened face glowed as if it would burst; the eyebrows were still white with the frost.

"Late again, Savushkin." Like most young teachers Anna liked to be strict, but now an almost plaintive note sounded in her voice.

Considering the matter settled, Savushkin quickly slid to his place. Anna saw him shoving his oil-cloth school-bag into the desk and without turning his head asking something of the boy next to him.

Savushkin's unpunctuality annoyed Anna, it somehow spoiled the fine opening of the day for her. The geography teacher, a small dried-up old woman, very much like a night-moth, had once complained to Anna about Savushkin often being late to lessons. She complained of other things too—the children's inattentiveness, their much too boisterous behaviour. "Those first morning lessons are so trying," she said. They may be, for incompetent teachers who do not know how to hold the interest of their pupils—thought Anna disdainfully and offered to change hours with the old woman. She felt a prick of conscience now: the old teacher had doubtlessly sensed the challenge in Anna's magnanimous offer.

"Is everything clear?" she asked the class.

"Yes!" chorused the children.

"Very well. Then give me some examples."

There was a short silence and then someone said haltingly:

"Cat."

"Correct," said Anna, recalling that last year, too, cat had been the first example.

After that examples poured in like a stream—window . . . table . . . house . . . highway . . .

"Correct," Anna assured them. The children were joyously excited. It amazed Anna to see such joy at the discovery of a new aspect in long-familiar words. At first the choice of examples embraced only the most everyday, tangible things —cart, tractor, pail, nest.... From the back desk a fat boy called Vasya kept repeating in his thin voice, "Chicken, chicken, chicken."

But then someone said hesitantly:

"Town."

"Good," encouraged Anna.

"Street... victory... poem... play...."

"Well, that's enough," said Anna. "I can see you understand it."

The voices died down reluctantly, only fat Vasya's "chicken" still came from the back of the room. And then suddenly as if roused from sleep, Savushkin stood up behind his desk and shouted eagerly:

"Winter oak!"

The children laughed.

"Quiet, please!" Anna brought her palm down hard on the table.

"Winter oak!" repeated Savushkin heedless of the laughter around him or of Anna's orders. There was something peculiar in his manner. The words seemed to have burst out like a confession, like some glorious secret which could not remain unshared.

Annoyed and uncomprehending Anna asked barely controlling her irritation.

"Why 'winter oak'? 'Oak' is enough."

"Oh, an oak is nothing. A winter oak, that's a noun for you."

"Sit down, Savushkin. That's what coming in late brings to. Oak is a noun, and what the word 'winter' in this case is we have not studied as yet. You will come to the teachers' room during the interval."

"They'll give you your winter oak there," whispered somebody behind Savushkin.

Savushkin sat down smiling to himself, not in the least put out by the teacher's strict tone. A difficult boy, thought Anna.

The lesson continued.

"Sit down," said Anna when Savushkin entered the teachers' room. With evident pleasure the boy sank into a soft arm-chair and rocked a few times on its springs.

"Will you please tell me why you are always late for school?"

"I really don't know, Anna Vasilyevna," he said with a gesture of surprise. "I leave home an hour before school."

It seemed that even in trifling matters like this truth was not so easily to be established. There were many children who lived much farther away from school yet none of them needed more than an hour to get there on time.

"You live in Kuzminki, don't you?"

"No, I live on the sanatorium premises."

"Aren't you ashamed, then, to tell me you leave home an hour before school? Why, it's fifteen minutes from the sanatorium to the highway, and no more than twenty minutes' walk down the highway!"

"But I don't never go down the highway. I take a short cut through the forest," Savushkin said earnestly.

"Don't *ever* go," Anna mechanically corrected him. Why did the children have to lie? she thought unhappily. Why couldn't Savushkin tell her simply, "I'm sorry, Anna Vasilyevna, I stopped to play snowballs with the kids," or something else equally straightforward. But the boy said no more and just looked at her out of his large grey eyes as if wondering what else she would want of him.

"It's a sad business, Savushkin. I'll have to talk to your parents about it."

"There's only my mother, Anna Vasilyevna," Savushkin said softly.

Anna blushed. She remembered the boy's mother, the "shower nurse," as her son called her. A withered, tired-looking woman who worked at the sanatorium's hydrotherapy section. From continuous contact with heated water her hands, limp and white, looked as if they were made of cotton. After her husband had been killed in the war she remained alone to bring up four children as best she could. She certainly had enough worry without being bothered about her son's behaviour. But all the same they had to meet.

"I'll have to come to see your mother then," said Anna.

"Please do, Anna Vasilyevna. She'll be so glad to see you."

"I doubt that. Which shift does she work on?"

"The second. She goes to work at three."

"Very well then. I finish at two. We'll go together right after lessons."

Savushkin led Anna Vasilyevna along the path that started right at the back of the school. As soon as they entered the forest and the heavy snow-loaded fir branches linked up behind them, they found themselves in a different, enchanted world of peace and quiet. Now and then magpies and crows darted from tree to tree shaking the spreading branches, knocking off dry pine cones, and occasionally breaking off a brittle twig. But the sounds were short-lived and muffled.

Everything around was white. Only up against the blue sky the dainty lacework of birch tops stood out as if sketched in with Indian ink.

The path followed a frozen brook, now right down along the bank, now climbing up a steep rise. Occasionally the trees fell back revealing a sunlit clearing criss-crossed with hares' tracks that looked like a watch chain pattern. There were larger tracks too, shaped like a shamrock. They led away into the densest part of the woods.

"Elk's tracks," said Savushkin, following the direction of Anna's gaze. "Don't be afraid of him," he added, reading an unspoken question in her eyes.

"Have you ever seen him?" asked Anna.

"The elk? No. No such luck," sighed Savushkin. "I've seen his droppings though."

"What?"

"His dung," Savushkin explained, embarrassed.

Diving under a twisted willow the path ran down to the brook again. The surface of the brook was in parts covered with a thick layer of snow, in parts its icy armour lay clear and sparkling, and there were spots where unfrozen water stood out in dark, evil-looking blotches.

"Why hasn't it frozen there?" Anna asked.

"Warm springs. Look, you can see one coming up right there."

Bending over the clear water Anna saw a thin quivering thread which rose up from the bottom of the stream and burst into tiny bubbles before reaching the surface. It looked like a lily of the valley with a fragile stem and tiny white flowers.

"Plenty of these springs here," Savushkin explained eagerly, "that's why the brook never freezes right through."

They came to another unfrozen stretch, with pitch black but transparent water.

Anna threw a handful of snow into it. The snow did not melt, but grew bulkier at once and sank, spreading out in the water like some jellified greenish weeds. This pleased her so much that she started knocking the snow into the water, trying to push off bigger lumps which took on especially fancy shapes. Carried away by the game she did not notice Savushkin go on ahead. He perched up on a low tree branch hanging right over the brook and sat there waiting for her. A thin layer of ice covered the surface of the brook there and fleeting light shadows kept moving over it.

"Look how thin the ice is, you can see the water flowing underneath," said Anna, coming up to the boy.

"Oh, no, Anna Vasilyevna, it's the branch I'm sitting on. It sways and the shadows over the ice sway with it."

Anna blushed. It looked as if she had better hold her tongue here, in the woods.

Savushkin trod on ahead, bending slightly and throwing keen glances around. Anna followed behind.

The winding path led them on and on. There seemed to be no end to all those trees and huge snow-drifts, to that enchanted silence and sun-drenched twilight.

Suddenly bluish-white patches gleamed ahead. The trees grew sparser. The path rounded a dense nut-tree grove and then no longer isolated patches but a vast clearing flooded with sunlight opened up before their eyes. The trees stepped humbly aside and in the middle of the clearing in sparkling white garment stood an old oak, tall and majestic like a cathedral. Its branches spread far out over the clearing and the snow nestling in the cracks of the bark made

its gigantic trunk look as if inlaid with silver. It had not shed its dried foliage and stood now covered to the very top with snow-capped leaves.

"The winter oak!" gasped Anna. She reverently approached the tree and stopped under its glittering branches.

Unaware of the tumult in his teacher's heart, Savushkin got busy with something at the bottom of the trunk, treating the magnificent tree with the familiarity of a long-standing friendship.

"Come here, Anna Vasilyevna," he called. "Look!"

He pushed off a large lump of snow with earth and old grass clinging to its under side. A little ball plastered with decayed leaves lay in the hollow below. The skeleton-like remnants of the leaves were pierced with sharply pointed needles.

"A hedgehog!" cried Anna.

"See, how well he hid himself?" And Savushkin carefully restored the protective covering of earth and snow over the immobile hedgehog. Then he dug at another spot and revealed a tiny cave with icicles hanging at its opening. It was occupied by a brown frog, its tightly-stretched skin shiny as if it were lacquered.

Savushkin touched the frog. It made no movement.

"Isn't he a sly one?" laughed Savushkin. "Shamming dead. But just watch him leap as soon as the sun warms him up a bit."

He guided Anna on through this world he knew so well. There were numerous other tenants in and around the oak: insects, lizards, worms. Some hid among the roots, others in the deep cracks of the bark. Thin, withered, apparently lifeless, they slept there all through the winter. The powerful tree accumulated in itself a store of vital warmth, and those poor creatures could not wish for a better shelter. Fascinated, Anna watched this hidden forest life, so little known to her.

"Dear me, Mother'll be at work by now!" came Savushkin's anxious voice.

Anna looked at her watch. A quarter past three. She felt trapped. Ashamed for her human failings and inwardly begging forgiveness of the oak she said:

"Well, Savushkin, this only proves that a short cut is not always the best way to choose. You'll have to go along the highroad from now on."

Savushkin looked down and did not reply.

Heavens! thought Anna, isn't this the clearest proof of my incompetence!

The morning lesson flashed in her mind. How dull and lifeless were her explanations, how utterly devoid of feeling. And she was teaching the children their native language, a language so beautiful, so rich in shades, colour and meaning! An experienced pedagogue, indeed! She's taken no more than a few faltering steps along the path that might well require a whole lifetime to cover. And how is one not to swerve aside, but follow the correct course? Yet the joy with which her pupils shouted familiar words, a joy she had not fully appreciated or shared, told her now that she had not strayed too hopelessly after all.

"Thank you, Savushkin, for the lovely walk," she said. "I did not mean what I've just told you. Of course, you can take this forest path to school."

"Thank you, Anna Vasilyevna," Savushkin blushed with pleasure. He wanted to promise his teacher right there and then that he would never be late again, but checked himself, for fear of failing to keep his word. He only raised his collar and pulling down his hat said:

"I'll see you back to school."

"No, don't. I'll find the way myself now."

He looked at her in some doubt, then picked up a long stick, broke off its thinner end and offered it to Anna.

"Take this," he said, "if an elk comes your way, just hit him on the back and he'll run for all he's worth. Though better not hit him, just raise the stick at him. He might take offence, you know, and leave the woods for good."

"Don't worry, I shan't hit him," she promised.

She took a few steps back, then stopped and turned to take one last look at the winter oak, tinged with pink by the setting sun. A small dark figure stood at the bottom of the trunk. Savushkin did not go home. He stayed to guard his teacher's way even if from a distance.

And suddenly Anna knew that the most wonderful being in that forest was not the winter oak but this small boy in battered felt boots and patched clothes, the son of a "shower nurse" and a soldier killed in war.

She waved her hand to him and went on her way.

Translated by Valentina Jacque



On the Way

THE lorry sped along the well-worn road, rattling hollowly over the bumps. The undulating fields, ploughed and waiting to be sown, had long been left far behind. Now, on either side, the South Urals steppes were slowly unfolding their pallid, unvaried beauty, with only the occasional glades surrounding the lone birch-trees in the moist hollows providing spots of colour.

Rising obliquely and dropping like a stone, a hawk traced its flight across the unfathomable spring sky.

It was stuffy in the cab, the air was heavy with petrol fumes and stale tobacco smoke, and Zoya felt drowsy.

Without warning a warm May shower came bouncing down. The fleet drops sparkled in the sun like glass beads. Zoya fancied she could hear them tinkle as they fell beneath the wheels. She put her hand out of the window, palms upturned to catch them. A glance at the scowling driver at her side brought a momentary frown to her own brow. How could Semyon remain so indifferent to this pretty, glinting, tinkling rain?

But Semyon's only reaction was to step furiously on the throttle as though to outdistance the rain. When, just as suddenly as it had begun, the shower stopped, it seemed to Zoya as though Semyon had really won the race, and for an instant she felt envious of his skill.

The light slowly faded. On the horizon, beyond the distant birch grove the clouds gathered in a great red and lilac bank.

"Oh, how beautiful!" Zoya exclaimed. "The earth is like a human face now. The steppe is breathing."

Semyon hadn't caught her words. "What?" he shouted. "Rain? That's all that's lacking," he growled with an irritated shrug of his shoulders. "Now we'll get the grain wet."

"No, we won't. We've got a canvas sheet to cover it with!"

Zoya was happy that Semyon had spoken at last. His silence had been oppressive. Since morning he'd been in a bad mood. He'd known that they had to drive to the neighbouring collective farm for grain that day but he hadn't turned up. They had hunted for him all over the village and when at last they had found him at the widow Dementieva's house, he had refused to budge. He had a bad hangover, he said, as if it meant nothing to him that their farm was going to expand its wheat fields this spring and the grain they were going to borrow from their neighbours would be sown on the loamy plots that had lain idle for so long.

But Semyon relapsed into his sulky silence.

"What a dull stick you are. A log, not a man!" Zoya taunted, vexed that he had retreated into his own shell again and was paying no attention to her.

"Shut up, chatterbox!"

It came like a bath of cold water. Lowering her head, she said softly, childishly:

"I'm not a chatterbox, I'm Zoya Makarova."

"Fancy that!" Semyon drawled.

The brief exchange left Zoya feeling lost. She felt now that Semyon was a remote stranger to her, with a life of his own that she knew nothing about. She looked up at him to try to read his thoughts, to divine what it was that was troubling and hurting him. What she saw was an intelligent-looking face, at once stern and sorrowful of feature. There was a decided suggestion of strength about him. It saddened her to think that she was so much younger than he, and smaller, and, in all likelihood, not nearly as clever, that she could not speak to him as to an equal, as to a friend or a brother. Yes, she told herself, it was because he hardly knew her, because he thought of her as still a child who knew nothing of life and how heavy a person's heart might feel sometimes that he sat so oppressively silent by her side, without a word or a glance for her.

Zoya was the eldest in a family of four children. Seeing how hard it was for her father to support and bring them up unaided, she went to work as a clerk in the granary as soon as she finished seven-year school. She saw Semyon often, either in the field, or at the club, or at the farm office, but all she knew of him was that he had recently come back from the army, that he had been offered the

post of secretary of the village Soviet but had turned it down. He had a driver's license and preferred, he said, "a rolling life." His reputation was not of the best: he was forever hanging about the widow Dementieva, often disappeared with the lorry for hours, drank too much, came late to work, answered rudely when called to order. On the other hand, he never got into fights and was lovingly attentive to his aged mother. Many of the young girls, Zoya knew, were secretly in love with him and jealously vied with each other for his attentions.

Zoya too felt attracted to him but Semyon never seemed to notice her. He did not even know her name, she suspected. Lately she had dreamed of him often, and in her dreams everything was very simple: she chatted with him gaily while he nodded and smiled at her. In her waking hours, though, scold herself as she might for it, she would turn away shyly whenever she caught sight of him. The thought that he might guess her secret and laugh at her in public would send the blood flaming to her cheeks. Now, when he was sitting side by side with her, he seemed different from what people said, just an ordinary young man. Perhaps it was because for the moment Semyon was her subordinate, because it was she who was in charge of this expedition.

The wild steppe came to an end. Again freshly turned, well-tilled plough-land stretched on either side of the road, hedging in close to it.

Ahead of them lay a village and soon they were driving through its streets, past large huts and close rows of poplars that seemed tinged with blue in the twilight.

"Step on it, Semyon, put on more speed," Zoya urged.

Semyon threw her a sidelong glance but refrained from answering. When they drove up to the seed shed Zoya's heart skipped a beat: the round-shouldered, white-moustached storeman was just locking up the heavy iron-bound door. The plump girl who was his clerk stood beside him, braiding her hair. Off to one side the loaders were sitting, munching pickled cucumbers and bread. A dusty hen hopped about the scales, pecking thievishly at the spilled grain.

Zoya jumped from the lorry before Semyon could bring it to a stop.

"Hello, everybody!" she cried with assumed cheerfulness. "Hold everything, Comrade Kozhin. Attend to us before you lock up; here's the bill."

The storeman looked around reluctantly, his head to one side as if to say: "What's this come blowing in?" He gave a creaking laugh.

"Nothing doing, young woman! From this minute on my public duties are finished. I'm a private citizen now. I'm tired and I'm going home to bed."

Zoya noticed that the storeman was red-headed and that the young clerk was dressed in a badly cut polka dot dress. She was standing there smiling at Semyon, the hussy!

"But just take a look at the bill! It's signed by your chairman, and it's marked 'urgent.'"

"By the chairman? Good." The storeman's voice was expressionless. "Then it's in order. Ha-ha!"

He twirled his big key in front of Zoya's nose and pocketed it. Undecided what to do, how to break through Kozhin's hardened bureaucratic shell, Zoya

cast a helpless glance at Semyon. He was leaning against the engine hood, a disinterested onlooker. A lot he cares if we have to go back empty, Zoya fumed. Stands there listening as if we were giving a concert specially for him! Semyon lounged over to the plump girl, shook hands with her and, glancing at Zoya, made some remark. The girl laughed loudly. Zoya suddenly hated Semyon and everything about him, his handsome, smiling face, his muscular, well-built body.

"Step aside, my girl," said the storeman, walking away from the shed. "I'm going home. I didn't sleep a wink last night. You'll have to wait."

Zoya barred his way and, more angry now with Semyon than with him, cried in a high-pitched voice:

"I won't let you go! I'll pull you right out of bed!"

"Nothing doing!" Kozhin waved her aside. "It's been laid down that the working day is until six sharp. That's law. Come on time tomorrow and I'll be at your service. See, the night watchman's come already."

A tall old man with a shot-gun slung over his shoulder stopped near the lorry, puffing at a twisted bit of cigarette he had rolled himself. His whole attitude said more clearly than words: "You can quarrel as much as you like, citizens. It's nothing to do with me." Keenly aware of Semyon's presence, Zoya waved her bills and renewed her attack on the storeman.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself. People like you are like spokes in a wheel." She spoke rapidly, angrily. "Why, a single minute lost in the sowing season is a loss to the whole country, but all you know is six sharp. It's cold-blooded people like you and . . . others . . . who are to blame that there's still so much wrong in our lives"

For a moment there was complete silence. The watchman coughed. The hen fluttered her wings and ran off. The loaders stopped chewing. Semyon turned away from the stout girl and stared at Zoya as though seeing her for the first time.

Kozhin stepped back a pace and said caustically:

"Oh, big talk, eh? Because you're young and have gone to school you think you can come here and teach us, eh?"

Just as Zoya rose on tiptoe to shout a biting retort Semyon stepped forward.

"Wait a minute, Zoya," he said calmly, "don't eat Uncle Kozhin up alive: he doesn't taste good raw." A few big steps brought him up to them. "Greetings, chief!" he said, holding his hand out to the storeman. "Don't you recognize old friends? We made merry together at your nephew's wedding, remember? Don't think I've forgotten how you out-danced all the young men!"

The storeman smoothed out his white moustache with the back of his hand and said modestly:

"Oh, that was a long time ago! I thought you looked familiar. Why so late? An accident?"

"Landed in a ditch," lied Semyon. "Be a good friend, don't make us go back empty."

Kozhin shifted his eyes from Semyon to Zoya and back again.

"Only for you will I violate the regulations. For old friendship's sake."

He took the key out of his pocket and walked back to the door of the storehouse. Semyon winked at Zoya but she hastily turned away. She didn't want him to see how happy it made her that they were going to get the grain now and, more especially, that he had turned out to be more considerate of the farm's interests than she had thought. And he did know her name!

But her gratitude was short-lived. Semyon left her to take over the grain and even it out in the lorry with a heavy shovel all by herself while he wandered back to resume his idle chattering with the plump clerk. He blew his cigarette smoke right into her face but though she coughed and sneezed the girl hadn't the self-respect to turn her heels on him. Zoya tried not to look at them or hear their laughter. The grain the men were pouring into the lorry seemed as hard and heavy as peas to her.

When the lorry was full the girl signed Zoya's bills. As Zoya took them back her eyes met Semyon's. She blushed and lowered her head to study the bills, holding them close to her face. Then, while she was spreading the canvas sheet over the grain, Semyon, unabashed by the presence of others, offered to give some strangers who had suddenly come along with bundles and knapsacks a lift—for a price. When the price had been agreed upon he turned to Zoya and asked:

"Shall we take them along? I could use a little something extra for a drink or two."

Zoya answered loudly, for all of them—the girl and the loaders and the strangers—to hear.

"No, by no means. I'm responsible for the grain."

"I see," said Semyon. "Showing your gratitude for my talking over Kozhin."

2

For a long while they rode in silence. Zoya felt confused. She wanted to get home in a hurry, unload the grain and then go off by herself to figure out at last what kind of person Semyon was and why he, who appeared to be a good-for-nothing, should trouble her dreams, while fine, upstanding lads left her cold.

Semyon pressed the horn: a group of sparrows were hopping along the road. He grinned when they fluttered up almost from under the wheels and then settled down again a few yards ahead.

"Damn! A bunch of migrants!" he laughed, and suddenly asked: "Think I really care that you didn't let me make a couple of roubles on those fellows?"

"Yes, I think you do," she answered slowly, suspiciously.

"Well, go on thinking so, maybe your hair will get curlier," he jested and then added: "Some opinion you've got of me, my girl!"

"You've earned it."

Semyon scowled.

"A lot you know. Maybe I'm glad I didn't make the money for a drink. Glad! Can you imagine that, Zoya Makarova?"

"Oh, I can imagine it all right, only... you're not a bit glad... you're just being tricky."

Semyon shook his head, surprised to see how hard it was to get around Zoya. He knitted his brows, wondering how to convince her. Suddenly he was very anxious for Zoya to believe him, to trust him and not sit at his side like a strict little judge.

As they were crossing a dry gully the lorry lurched precariously. Zoya gasped and clutched at Semyon's shoulder. Grinning he got the lorry safely past the gully and set it speeding over the now smooth road.

"We're doing fine. You're a good driver," Zoya praised.

Semyon knew that he was good at his job, but it gave him pleasure to hear Zoya say so. She was probably cleverer than he and better educated, he thought to himself. She'd probably mapped out a definite course for her life. He realized suddenly that he was just a little afraid of her. Stealthily he studied her. Her small pure face and tight black braids, the stern glance of her large green eyes, her childishly full lips and sturdy little figure appealed to him. But whenever she said something that hurt his pride she seemed a cross stranger to him.

Involuntarily he began to compare her with other girls he knew and found nothing special to distinguish her from them, unless it was her proud independence of spirit. Why then, he wondered, was he beginning to feel such strong respect for her, even to fear her a little?

"Wo-men!" He said aloud, finishing the customary thought in his own mind: You're all alike, only your dresses are different.

"Do you know the story of the Gingerbread Roll?" Zoya asked. "Of the old woman who swept and scraped the bin and baked a Gingerbread Roll?"

"And then what?" Semyon asked with interest.

"That's what you and I are doing now, bringing a Gingerbread Roll to our farm. Only our grain will be used for sowing, not baking."

"I don't get the point. What do you mean?"

"Nothing. It just happened to come into my head. Bread doesn't just pop into people's mouths. They have to work hard for it, not like some who like to live an easy life."

"Oh," drawled Semyon. That was one for him, he knew, but he did not take offence. "So you're a story-teller."

She was beginning to reform him, he told himself, and the thought made him feel good. He glanced at Zoya's white, rounded forehead, at her firmly compressed lips, and thought that she'd probably never been kissed yet. He felt a sudden desire to become good friends with her, to be able to talk to her freely, about anything that came into his head.

"You know," he confided, "I came home from the army and I felt bored. No friends—they'd all scattered. My only consolation was that my work didn't keep me tied down to one place. You drive alone—with no one to boss you."

"You'll make new friends," Zoya said confidently. "You'll find them right in the village, and besides, people are coming to us now from all over the country. Don't you read the papers?"

Semyon nodded so hastily that Zoya understood that his reading was very haphazard.

"They say I'm a drunkard. Why, I don't drink anything like the way I used to. Just once in a while—for nothing better to do. Once I used to drink a lot, that's a fact. Well, the name I made for myself then follows me around. Now, whether I drink or not, I'm called a drunkard. So I may as well drink—it makes no difference."

A nice piece of reasoning, thought Zoya. The trouble with him was, she decided, that he led a lonely life. And his work was nothing but a duty to him, just a way of earning money to support his mother. After work he drowned his boredom in drink—and it was boredom too that drove him to play around with women.

As though he could read her thoughts, Semyon said:

"So what of it? A man is only human! You needn't blush. Haven't you got a boy friend—some fine young dandy? Confess, now."

"Three of them!" snapped Zoya, angry with Semyon for speaking of such matters with her.

Semyon's spirits lifted and he drove faster. Obviously, Zoya had no boy friend.

A little while later they came to a steep hill and the engine throbbed protestingly. Semyon's face was flushed with exertion. The veins stood out on his temples, his eyes were intently focussed on the road. Watching him, it seemed to Zoya as if the lorry was refusing to climb the hill and Semyon was dragging it up by sheer force. For the first time it occurred to her that driving a car might not be such an easy job after all and that Semyon was probably tired. She felt deeply sorry for him, as though he were not a stranger but her own brother.

It was not so stuffy in the cab now. The odour of petrol had disappeared and Semyon hadn't smoked for a long time. Zoya felt like reminding him to have a smoke. Turning her candid eyes towards him she noticed a streak of grease on his cheek and instinctively made a quickly checked movement to wipe it away.

"You've got some grease on your cheek, here's a handkerchief."

Hurriedly wiping his face with the palm of his hand, Semyon gave a grateful nod.

When they'd crested the hill they both sighed with relief and smiled at each other.

"Downhill now. I like that—you fly like a bird," said Semyon, stepping on the throttle.

Zoya stiffened. The road ahead was pitted and rutted—the shepherds always drove their herds across at this spot. Semyon threw her a mischievous glance.

"Get set for the ride of your life, Zoya. Scared?"

"Don't be silly," she answered, half in elation, half in reproof, and lightly placed her hand on the wheel, regretting that she did not know how to drive.

Faster and faster went the lorry. The wind blew in their faces.

"Careful, you'll spill the grain," cried Zoya.

Semyon's nostrils flared, his face assumed a repellent expression. How horrid he looks, thought Zoya, like a drunkard. Below, the road made a sharp turn. Semyon slammed on the brakes. The lorry took the turn safely

but just as Zoya drew a breath of relief it skidded. With an ominous hiss from the back tyre it came to a stop at the very edge of a ditch.

"The ride of my life, indeed!" flamed Zoya, jumping from the cab right on to a hawthorn bush and not feeling its thorns.

Semyon climbed down with a guilty look at Zoya. She was already busy feeling the deflated tyre.

"Looks like you'll have to change it, Mr. Chauffeur."

Semyon was too vexed with himself to say anything. The sun had already set, by the time he got done it would be quite dark.

Together they rolled the spare tyre over.

"I thought at least you were a good driver, but you're only a daredevil." Zoya spoke angrily, as though the mishap were a personal insult to her. "I know your kind. You think you can ride recklessly through life . . . and you break your necks. Oh, I can read you like a book now, I've found the key to you."

"Oh, Zoya, please. . . ."

"Well, don't just stand there looking. Fix it."

Semyon's forlorn expression mollified her. Concealing a smile, she said authoritatively: "You've gone stale, that's what. Like untilled ground, you want ploughing. Just look at you, unshaven, untidy, uph!"

"You've got it all down pat, I see," answered Semyon, jacking up the lorry.

Zoya watched it go up. Then Semyon crawled under it with a wrench but stopped in indecision before a rain puddle. Zoya looked around for a board or stick to give him, but there was nothing in sight.

"Oh, for the joys of the chauffeur!" sighed Semyon and plumped himself down in the puddle.

It doesn't really matter to him, thought Zoya. He's used to wallowing drunkenly in puddles. Semyon stretched out flat on his back, flexed his knees and went busily to work. Watching his deft movements Zoya's anger evaporated. "He really is a good worker," she told herself.

After a long interval of silence Semyon cried "Done!" and handing Zoya the wrench to hold for a minute—its handle warm from his big hands—he came crawling out from under the lorry. Straightening himself to his full height, he spread his arms as though about to embrace her.

Zoya hastily sprang away. To cover her confusion, she asked aimlessly: "Is the grain all right?"

Semyon checked the canvas cover.

"All's well. . . with your Gingerbread Roll."

Meeting Zoya's smiling eyes, he snorted like a boy. It was funny, he thought, she'd given him hell, but he didn't mind. What was it she had said? "You want ploughing!" Some chatterbox, he grinned.

"Come on, it's getting late," said Zoya, embarrassed by his intent gaze.

"What's the hurry?" Semyon objected, feeling his whole being pervaded by a strange joy.

Happily he drank in the silence of the steppes. The first stars were faintly visible in the mirror-like sky. Far off a late skylark poured forth its joyful song. Semyon listened in delight.

"Well, did you ever! he laughed at himself. There's something queer coming over you, my lad!"

Zoya, bending down to pull a blade of grass, noticed a run in her stocking. Without further ado, she slipped her shoe off and began to roll her stocking down. Semyon blushed. Looking up at him, Zoya said reprovingly:

"Don't you know enough to turn away?"

Semyon turned slowly and stood shifting from one foot to the other, keenly aware of the rustling of stockings, the snap of a garter.

At last they drove on. Semyon switched on his headlights and at once the steppe seemed to grow darker. The springs of the driver's seat creaked with the motion of the lorry. Glancing down, Semyon noticed a scratch on Zoya's leg.

"Look, it's bleeding . . ."

Zoya smiled her gratitude, pressed her handkerchief over the scratch.

"It's nothing."

"Too bad we've nothing to bandage it with."

Semyon sounded so concerned that Zoya burst into a laugh and patted his cheek lightly. For a moment her hand paused and then she snatched it away. Semyon caught his breath. She's a gentle soul, he thought, and to give vent to his joy sounded the horn several times.

"Will you be coming to the club tonight . . . Zoya Makarova?"

"I don't know."

Ahead of them loomed the huts of their own village. Their brightly lit windows promised the comforts of home.

3

As they drove through the village the headlights snatched from the darkness the long wattle fences, the wooden and brick walls of houses, telegraph poles, the ramshackle tea-house. Our poor steppeland village, thought Zoya and turned to Semyon.

"Do you like it by us?

Semyon looked at her in surprise.

"Why not? It can do. Only there are too few people."

At the granary Zoya jumped down. The drowsy, dishevelled night watchman, a warm jacket wrapped around him, opened the gate. Semyon backed the lorry up to the chute. Her heels clicking gaily over the flagstones, Zoya ran to the main door, unlocked it and went in.

Semyon stood beside the dusty engine hood, undecided whether to follow her or not. "There, the moment we arrive we become strangers again. All she thinks of is to get the grain in, lock the door and run home. Everyone's like that. I ought to turn around and walk off. Will she call me?"

Zoya came out again, re-arranging the kerchief on her head.

"Well, that's all," he said, feigning indifference. "The lorry's in place. Time now for me to be going."

Zoya was disappointed. It would be a bore to go to the office now to ask for someone to come and help unload the grain. She didn't want Semyon to go off and leave her alone. Let him work a little more. It won't hurt him.

"Wait a minute, Semyon. Help me unload."

She was afraid he would laugh at her and say it wasn't his job, his job was to bring the grain and see that the lorry was in good order. But Semyon stood studying the hood, slow to answer. His silence angered Zoya; she seized a shovel and said scornfully:

"If you don't want to, you don't have to. Poor thing, he's so-o tired."

Semyon searched for a shovel with his eyes, found one in the doorway, went over and took it and climbed on to the lorry—all without a word.

They worked without hurry, in silence, avoiding each other's eyes. Zoya shovelled up the grain carefully, her body bending and straightening rhythmically. A faint smile played about her lips. Her face was animated.

She enjoys working, Semyon observed to himself, imitating Zoya's movements and marvelling that he too was taking a pleasure he had never felt before in it. Hm, it seems it's easy to work when you do it right.

The grain was light, it seemed to slide on to the shovel of its own accord. When they had finished, Semyon helped Zoya down from the lorry.

"Tired?" he asked.

Zoya nodded and bent down to roll up the canvas sheet. Semyon shouldered the roll and carried it into the shed. Inside it was clean and dry and chilly. Zoya switched on her desk lamp, sat down and began to sort out a pile of papers. A big boss, thought Semyon, happy that they had come closer to each other that day, that she was no longer a stranger to him, that he felt attracted to this girl who was trusted to guard the grain.

"Can't say we're rich," he commented, looking round at the empty bins. For a moment he felt uncomfortable, as though he alone were to blame that the bins were not full. When we take the harvest in, he thought, I'll work day and night. I'll fill the bins to overflowing.

"Not bored?" Zoya asked, looking up from her writing. The light fell on her face, accenting her eyelashes, rounding her cheeks. Semyon made no answer; he was too busy enjoying the sight of her.

He sat down beside her, relaxing. Of course, he could not smoke here, Zoya wouldn't allow it. Nor could he move up closer and put his arm around her, she'd take offence. If only he could know for sure that Zoya liked being with him his happiness would be complete.

"What about you, not bored with me?"

"No," said Zoya, adding: "The two of us did a good day's work today." Semyon rose and leaned over her shoulder, his heart thumping.

"What are you writing?"

Zoya bent her head back. It was too much for Semyon, he cupped her chin in his hands and kissed her. Her warm lips trembled under his and then grew

rigid. His hand stroked her childishly rounded cheeks and came to rest on her warm shoulders but before he could kiss her again she sprang up and pushed him away. When he made to approach her again she slapped him roundly. Laughing nervously, Semyon rubbed his cheek, while Zoya stood before him, her fists cocked, ready to defend herself. It hurt him to see her so. They stood facing each other in awkward silence. His cheek burned. She's beginning to do the ploughing she said I needed, he told himself and shook his head.

"Now, I wouldn't have hit out," he said challengingly.

Zoya fancied he was laughing at her, that he hadn't the slightest respect for her and had kissed her just to pass the time. Too bad I didn't hit him harder, she regretted. Choking back her tears, she said sternly:

"Let's go. There's nothing more for us to do here," and letting him out ahead of her, locked the door.

Semyon took his jacket from the seat of the lorry, flung it over his shoulder and walked slowly to the gate, staring underfoot. Now she's angry and won't come to the club. Oh, damn! But I'll be there. I'll wait. Maybe she will come, after all. His cigarettes fell out of his jacket pocket and rolled over the flagstones, white and small. Zoya opened her mouth to call him back, but changed her mind. Beyond the gate she heard the deep, musical voice of the widow Marusya Dementieva.

"Hello, darling. I've been waiting for you. Coming home with me? Oh, come on, just for a little while."

Semyon slowed his pace.

"Oh, hello, hello," he said wearily. "No, I'm going home. See how dirty I am. I've got to wash all the dirt off me."

Zoya stood still until Semyon's footsteps had faded away. Then she ran blindly across the square and home.

4

The night was dark and stifling. The windows made pale squares of light. A gate creaked. Here and there dogs barked. From the river came the sound of splashes: during the day the banks had dried and now lumps of clay were breaking off and dropping into the water.

Semyon, dressed in his best trousers and a white shirt, carefully pressed by his mother, stood outside the club-house, his hands in his pockets, staring at a poster. From the open windows came the rumbling voice of a lecturer, punctuated by the coughing of his audience. Zoya was nowhere around: neither in the library, nor the lecture hall. So she hasn't come. But she may just be late, maybe she'll still come? For want of anything better to do he read the poster: "Today: Is There Life on Other Planets? Lecturer—Comrade Pryanikov."

"Is there life on other planets?" he asked himself. There probably was, he decided, and tried to imagine the people who lived somewhere high up in the sky. Like the people on earth, they probably sowed grain, went to the bath-house, drank vodka on holidays. And, surely, they had lorries and drivers. It

wouldn't be a bad thing to fly over somehow and pay them a visit for a week or two. Their way of life might be altogether different from ours, and their laws too. For some reason he felt certain that on the other planets drivers didn't have to have licenses, that it was forbidden to have anything to do with widows, that drinking was restricted and that one worked only when one felt like it. And the girls there didn't take offence when they were kissed. On the contrary, they laughed and said "Darling." But then they certainly didn't have such warm steppeland nights as we had here, such clever lecturers, or such a village club-house where one could stand for hours waiting for Zoya Makarova. And, oh, there was no Zoya Makarova there either. Semyon suddenly decided he didn't really want to visit any other planet after all. Let the people who lived on them stay there, he would remain here.

There was still no Zoya. Semyon walked round the club-house, looking into its windows. He saw the stout lecturer with his spectacles pushed up on his forehead, the quiet, attentive faces of the audience. There were two empty seats in the back row, as though left specially for Zoya and himself. Semyon sighed and remembered the slap she had given him. Again he saw her standing before him, anger blazing in her eyes. "If she comes I'll know she's forgiven me. I'll kiss her again."

At the sound of steps behind him he whirled about in time to see an indistinct figure slip behind an old birch-tree on the other side of the fence. He recognized the white shawl of Marusya Dementieva and felt annoyed.

Is she spying on me or is it just by chance that she's here? No, spying. She's standing behind the birch, fiddling with the fringes of her shawl, watching me. He recalled her pudgy, cold hands and watchful, sullen eyes when he left her in the mornings. He'd found her anxiety to please him and forestall his every wish so flattering that he'd always shrugged aside his mother's warnings to be careful or he'd find himself married to her before he knew it.

Suddenly Semyon felt sorry for Marusya. He wanted to go over and embrace her and walk home with her. She always had a birch-wood fire going to spread its warmth and redolence through her house. And there was always plenty to drink. Marusya would set a pitcher of strong yellow home-brewed beer on the table, pour him a glass, and leaning her chin on her hands, look into his eyes, waiting for a kind word. And next morning he'd wake up with a headache, feeling ashamed of himself all over again and tortured by the thought that time was passing and his life was empty.

Oh, Zoya, my sweet, it's too bad you didn't come.

Semyon was startled out of his reverie by a burst of applause from within and the scraping of benches. In a moment they'd all come pouring out.

He moved away from the door and again caught a glimpse of the white shawl behind the old birch. Marusya was walking away with deliberately slow steps, as though expecting to hear her name called. The shawl was a floating white spot. Unthinkingly, Semyon followed her.

Where the street turned down to the river, Marusya disappeared from sight. Semyon stopped beside a log barn and lit a cigarette. He didn't want to follow

her any further. From afar came the sound of girlish laughter and the strains of an accordion—dancing had begun at the club. But he didn't want to go back there either. He felt very tired. "Did we bring the grain today?" he asked himself. "We did. Did we unload it? We did. Full stop."

He recalled Zoya's dark green eyes and half closed his own, savouring again her soft warm lips. Tomorrow they would drive out again for a second load of grain. Again there would be the wide expanse of steppeland, the late skylark, Zoya's tender sidelong glance and that memorable spot on the road where he had changed the tyre and Zoya had called him stale. Again she would order him about and he'd have the same feeling of respect and diffidence he had experienced today. It would be nice to have Zoya praise him tomorrow, first for getting up early and then for driving well—with no mishaps at all this time—and to have her thank him twice, once when he loaded the grain at Kozhin's and the second time when he helped unload it at home.

He turned into a side street and took a roundabout way home that would bring him past Zoya's house. "Aren't you the fool," he told himself, tapping a finger on his forehead, "to think she'd come running at once. She's not Marusya. You've got to earn her love. Yes, but how?"

As he walked along he glanced into the windows of the houses he passed. In some, people were supping, in others, preparing for bed. He began to laugh at himself: "It's all for the better—at least you'll get a good night's rest tonight."

At Zoya's house he stopped and stared into the window. Looking over the narrow little curtain he could see Zoya sitting at a table, a thoughtful frown on her face. Beside her stood her lanky father talking to her angrily, gesticulating wildly. Huddled together in a corner sat three little girls, Zoya's sisters. They looked frightened.

Semyon waited. If Zoya's father lifted his hand against her he would burst in and protect her. But the father only kept on talking and waving his arms. Regretting that he had no good excuse to go in, he turned away and made his way home.

Perhaps it was family troubles that had kept her at home? Semyon knew he was deceiving himself but it was comforting to think that perhaps she hadn't meant to snub him. Never before had he felt this way. For a moment the thought that his life was taking a new turn frightened him. Judging by the beginning, his love for Zoya promised to be hard and sweet, such as until now he had known only from the cinema.

The stars twinkled brightly in the sky, like fire-flies, with a faint greenish light. The accordion fell silent, and the footsteps behind him, a girl's soft laughter, fell on his ear distinctly.

There'll be little sleep for them tonight, Semyon thought with sympathy, and knocked at the window of his own hut.

Translated by Asya Shoyett

Evalds Vilks was born of working-class parents in Valka, Latvia, in 1923.

He joined the Red Army at the outbreak of war and fought till 1942 when he was severely wounded.

After the war Vilks worked on a youth newspaper in Riga and wrote stories of his war-time experiences and post-war life.

The first volume of his stories, *Men With a Common Purpose* came out in 1949. In 1955 it was followed by another collection, *Autumn Days*, to which the story we have given here belongs.

Evalds Vilks

THE NEW MAN

J COULDN'T understand what was the matter. Everything around was heaving up and down. I seemed to have dozed at the helm, and the hand-grips I had let go off kept hitting my arm.

It was my wife, trying to wake me up.

"Voldis! Voldis! Will you wake up! Somebody's knocking on the window."

At last I made out a cautious, persistent knocking. I could see the glowing end of a cigarette gleaming in the darkness outside like a lighthouse far away.

I opened the door. A very tall, stout man burst into the room and flopped down on a stool. His round face with its little eyes and a nose that seemed to have been broken off, wore a serious expression.

"2001's just brought in nine tons of sprats, skipper." His voice seemed to come from the bottom of a barrel.

I still was not fully awake. It took time for his words to sink in. It must be pouring outside, I thought; his canvas jacket was dripping wet. One eye was hidden by the peak of his cap, the other stared out at me. His shirt was unbuttoned at the neck. The year round, people could admire the manly chest of Yuris Varapoga with a dragon's head tattooed on it.



At last I came to my senses and asked: "Where are they now?"

"Turned in the catch and put out to sea again. Said we were lazy louts."

Here Varapoga sucked at the remains of a cigarette he held gingerly between two fingers. He was not so much smoking as singeing his nails. Then he tossed the stub on to the sheet of iron in front of the stove, and stood up.

"Three of the crew are down at the pier," he said pulling his cap down over his eye still further.

"Good! Round up the rest. I'll be there before you know it."

Varapoga had opened the door, but he shoved it to again. The one eye studied me, blinking a bit. I couldn't see what the other was doing under the peak of his cap, but I felt what was coming.

"Better take something with us to warm us up. It'd come in handy."

"No vodka—not a drop!"

He didn't argue. He just mumbled something unconcernedly as if it was somebody else who had wanted it.

"You know best, skipper. But no vodka, no catch. Mark my words."

And Varapoga went off.

I threw on my togs as fast as I could, trying not to wake my wife. She had managed to doze off again.

"Gone clean crazy, that *2001*. Nine tons more—ahead of us again. Think they're better than we are, do they?" I said to myself as I tiptoed out to the kitchen, boots in hand. But my wife raised her head.

"Where are you off to?"

"Back to the old tub. Varapoga says *2001*'s ahead of us again, blast 'em!"

"What's that to you? If they want to break their necks, let them. Couldn't you stay home just one day? There's a pig to be bought, and the garden has to be dug up. I can't even remember when you've chopped any wood for me. Nice husband I've got, Might as well not have one."

"Can I help it? The sprats're running, and when they're running a fisherman's got to be on the spot. But just you wait, I'll buy you a velvet dress and a wrist-watch with the money I get from the catch."

"Now, you needn't try to get round me that way," said my wife. "Dress warm. It's cold out there."

"It won't be the first time I've smoked my pipe in the wind."

My three little skippers were sleeping sweetly in their beds never suspecting that at that very moment, *2001*, that same *2001* that had beaten their father, was ploughing its way through the waves in the darkness. The elder had a bump on his head. He must have been in a fight, or fallen off the roof of the shed. "Couldn't expect anything else with your father at sea day in, day out. . . . But we've got to take the Red Banner away from *2001*. And we will, won't we, skippers? And if we don't, you can just thump your dad on the head—hard!"

The narrow, sandy streets with the fishermen's cottages lining both sides were deserted. The weather had begun to clear. A moderate southerly wind was

blowing, bringing with it scents of spring and snow water. The sun had melted the snow in no time; there wasn't a trace of it left. Grass was beginning to show here and there along the fences, and the lilac buds had swelled to bursting-point. But I had no time to enjoy the feel of spring now. I had to get down to the dock as fast as I could.

A fishing-smack was tying up at the pier when I got there, and another was coming into the mouth of the Dvina at full speed. Every evening there were so many fishing boats in the harbour that it was impossible to tie up at the dock and pretty hard even to berth alongside some other boat. But now there were only five or six boats in all, including our *TRB-2002*. A thin ribbon of smoke was rising from the chimney over the crew's quarters and spreading out in a layer on the surface of the water. There was a smell of coal smoke and fish in the air.

Good, the lads are on board, I thought to myself as I headed for the harbour-master's office at the far end of the long pier. Captain Avotins, once master of a merchant ship, now retired on easier work, was on duty that night. In the little office, one wall of which was hung all over with charts, I found three of my crew. My two staunchest helpers, Edgar Priedite, the helmsman, and Peteris Eviedris, the net-man were there, Comsomols both of them. They were lively, hard-working lads in their early twenties. The third was our windlass-man, Bruno Kaneps, a reserved man verging on middle age, and a comparative newcomer. He was exaggeratedly neat and well-disciplined and was always gloomy and close-mouthed.

Avotins was looking through some papers. His lips were moving and he was breathing hard as if he had been running. He reminded me of a seal, and when he turned towards me, moving his whole body as he did so, I could hardly keep from laughing. Well, maybe I look like a hippopotamus myself and he can have his laugh at me.

"You've decided to put out again, Captain Bumbiers?"

"Yes."

"But you just got back last evening."

"2001 came in after we did, and they've gone out again."

"Well. . . . But where are your men?"

Edgar Priedite got up from the sofa: "Everybody's turned out except the engineer and Varapoga."

"And where's Peldnagla?"

"On board."

"M-mm-mmm," Avotins growled. "But I can't let you put out without an engineer. You know that perfectly well."

I nodded: "We don't intend to. Varapoga's gone to get him. They'll be here in a minute."

I glanced at my helmsman and net-man, and saw a question in their eyes: "Where were those two?" Our engineer, Augests Ozolin, lived just as close to the dock as I did, and Varapoga had been gone a long time. Well, we'd have to wait.

And we did. Avotins kept yawning all the time, and he stretched so hard his joints cracked. Priedite went outside to see if he couldn't hear Varapoga coming.

"Can't hear a thing," he said, coming in again. "Y'know what, skipper, I'll go to Ozolin's and see what's happened."

"You won't go anywhere. He'll come himself."

If Varapoga didn't come back, there would be no place for him in our crew, even though he was an experienced seaman and had sailed all the seas. When you can't depend on a man, you can't work with him. I didn't want to send the helmsman for Varapoga, then the net-man after the helmsman, and so on, and then have to go and collect them all myself.

Our patience was running out. We had begun to feel we couldn't stand one more minute in that little room where the walls seemed to be squeezing us in, when Varapoga ran in all out of breath with our engineer behind him. Varapoga pulled off his cap and threw himself on the sofa. It was almost too much for the springs. He wiped the beads of sweat off his shiny bald spot, and shouted:

"You'll see—it'll be a boy. Mark my words. Don't you forget—Varapoga told you that."

Augusts was distractedly running his hands through his pockets. He fished out a handkerchief, a bit of string, a knife, and a cigarette-holder, one after another and then put them back in his pockets again. His jacket was buttoned up crooked. He had missed a buttonhole and one side of it hung below the other. There was a bewildered, embarrassed look about him.

"Had to take Augusts' wife to the lying-in hospital," Varapoga finally announced.

Augusts couldn't calm down. I felt for him. I recalled the time I'd been expecting my first little skipper. I'd just come ashore. It was late at night. And I had rushed to the same place Augusts had been that evening, and waited and waited. Finally, I had settled myself as best I could on the hospital steps, and fallen asleep. The day had been a hard one. When they woke me, my son had already arrived.

I looked at Augusts. Good chap—he had come anyway. He had done his duty, but his heart and mind were there with his wife.

"What'll we do, skipper?" Varapoga asked looking at me.

I saw what he was thinking. I glanced at the helmsman and he nodded his approval.

"You're staying ashore this trip, Augusts," I said. "We'll find another engineer."

"I'll be glad to do his trick for him," Bruno Kaneps, the windlass-man, offered. "I know the job."

"We'll be all right, then," I agreed.

But the harbour-master put his oar in: "Got your engineer's papers?" he asked, looking up at Kaneps.

"Papers? No. But I know diesel engines inside out. And ours runs like a clock."

"If you haven't your papers you can't take the job. And I won't clear the boat without an engineer."

Avotins turned away. He apparently considered the incident closed. I stood there watching, feeling that my temper was getting the better of me all the time. He looked through some papers, opened his register for some reason or other, then closed it again. I didn't say anything and waited patiently for him to speak.

But Avotins said nothing, evidently waiting for us to talk first. Finally he had to speak:

"If you have a breakdown, who'll be called to account for it? You? No, me. I'll be asked to explain why I let a boat out without an engineer. Regulations are regulations. You wouldn't want to get an old man like me into trouble, would you?"

"No, of course not."

It was too bad, but old Avotins was right. And it was a good thing I had held my tongue. I might have called him a bureaucrat or something worse, and I'd have had to apologise. It's a good thing to count ten before you start arguing.

Suddenly Varapoga jumped up off the sofa with surprisingly young agility.

"Comrade Captain, I know you can't break the regulations, but in this case you have every right to write down in your log that Engineer Augusts Ozolin himself went aboard the *2002*. You can't tell, can you, whether an engineer who was standing here a minute ago went on board his boat or somewhere else? You can't trail everybody, can you? Nothing'll happen to our engine. Mark my words, everything'll be all right all round."

We all realized that Varapoga had the best of intentions in suggesting such a way out, but we couldn't resort to out-and-out deception. We'd have to find some other way.

Then we remembered there were a number of engineers living close by whose ships were in dock for repairs or standing in harbour. Priedite and Eviedris went out to reconnoitre, but nothing came of it. Some of the engineers weren't at home, others were getting ready to board their ships. Then it struck Avotins it would be a good idea to phone the lying-in hospital. Maybe the new citizen had already arrived on the scene.

The expectant father was instructed to ring up.

"Who's speaking? And who're you calling?" a man's voice said loudly.

"This is the engineer of *TRB-2002—Ozolin*," Augusts began nervously. "This evening, we brought my.... That is, I brought my.... My wife is there...."

"Young man," the voice interrupted, "why aren't you in bed? You'd better go now. Do you think you're the only person there is to see to the birth of your baby? Good night!"

"Hello! Hello!" Augusts shouted into the telephone. He blew into it several times, shook it, put it to his ear, and smiled a rather foolish smile. But I'm by no means sure the rest of us looked any less foolish than he did at that moment.

Augusts pulled his cap down firmly on his head, and strode to the door.

"Let's get going."

Varapoga and I were in such a hurry that we almost got stuck in the door—neither of us could be called thin. He gave me a boisterous shove in the side that sent me flying out into the street. His face was shining. I hadn't seen him in such spirits for a long time. Yes, whatever his little failings, Varapoga was solid gold through and through.

When we were on the pier near the 2002, the door of the harbour-master's office opened again and the figure of the old captain loomed up against the light.

"Hey, boys," he called out, "2001's fishing in area 9! Hope there won't be even a sea-horse's tail for you to hold on to!"

Among us fishermen it's supposed to bring bad luck to wish anybody a good catch.

2

Peldnagla¹ as we called him, was on deck when we got aboard. He had just come up out of the warm cabin, and was yawning and stretching sleepily. But before going on I must tell you how he got this nickname. Floating Nail's real name was Janis Varapoga but he was not related to Juris Varapoga. There are many people with that name in our parts. Janis was eighteen, but he didn't look more than fifteen. He was built small. And he had come to us with his tow head stuffed with an unbelievable quantity of adventure stories and a correspondingly scant knowledge of fishing. But knowledge is a thing that can be acquired. Varapoga the elder took the boy under his wing. The first lesson he gave him was something to be remembered. The teacher leaned over the rails and stared hard at one spot in the water for a long time. Varapoga the younger stared at the water, too, but of course, he didn't see anything. Finally, he couldn't stand the suspense any longer.

"What do you see?" he whispered.

"Shh-sh-h," Varapoga the elder hissed without even turning his head. "Don't you see—there's a nail floating over there?"

The boy stared at the water still harder.

"Mean to say you can't see it?" Varapoga said. There was a real surprise in his voice.

"Ahh-h-h!" the boy exclaimed at last. "Now I see it. Look at that—it really *is* floating!"

The sailors watching the two couldn't control their laughter any longer.

For a moment, the boy stood there his mouth wide open. Then he flushed red as a beet and his angry eyes bored into Varapoga's face. But Varapoga took him quietly by the hand as if nothing had happened.

"If you've done something silly," he said, "it's still sillier to get waxy at others about it. Get that into your head. That floating nail—I thought it up myself to make you see what there is and what there isn't, and to think fast. When you can do that, you'll be all right—everything'll come easy. Mark my words. And now, tell me—what's that rope for?"

¹ Peldnagla in Latvian means "Floating Nail"—Tr.



A Shepherd's Daughter

By Semyon Chuikov (Kirghiz S.S.R.)



Jugs

By Lavinia Bazhbeuk-Melikyan (Armenian S.S.R.)

After that, nobody called young Varapoga anything but Peldnagla. Maybe they did it because it was more convenient. When two people working together have the same name it's liable to cause confusion. And as a matter of fact, Peldnagla was even a little proud of having such a fine-sounding name—the only person on board to have a name that sounded like those of his favourite heroes—Eagle Eye, Lion Heart, Hawk's Claw.

And so, Peldnagla was waiting for us when we came on board.

"Thought you wouldn't come," he said yawning. "2001's probably put out her nets by this time."

"Little Nail," I said slapping him on the shoulder. "You have no idea what's going on in the world."

"What?"

"You're too young to understand," Varapoga interrupted. "When you grow up you'll find out."

"Well, don't forget to let me know about it when I'm old enough. I might not notice it myself."

"Don't you worry. We'll send a special announcement." I didn't hear the rest. Augusts had already started the engine. I went into the pilot-house.

Our 2002 was moving full speed ahead, rising and falling smoothly with the waves. It was dark. Only the light-buoys marking the shoreline could be seen. Varapoga and Peldnagla were up in the bow silently watching the dark water. The sea is very beautiful at night, and mysterious—as mysterious as an unexplored land. Finally, Varapoga went below. The boy stood there alone for a long time, and even I didn't notice when he turned in again.

Soon we left the two light-buoys at the mouth of the Dvina behind us. The boat began to roll more heavily. As we put out to sea, a feeling came over me which is very hard to describe. A hunter who has taken his rifle off his shoulder and is just entering the forest must experience the same thing, or a schoolboy standing outside the classroom where he is to take an examination. In my mind's eye I saw the invisible squares the bay was divided into. Drifters and fishing-smacks were shuttling back and forth across them now. I saw those hazards to fishing nets, the shallows and underwater reefs. I saw the huge islands of packed ice which breathe out cold like giant refrigerators. The desire grew in me to put out the nets now—here. Who could tell, shoals of sprat might be darting about right under our feet at that moment?

But the deck lights were reflected by water muddied with the spring freshets. We would have to wait. The only thing we would be likely to catch in such water would be some lone wandering perch, or perhaps an eel. It was our job to bring in five or six tons of fish a trip. And it would be fine to win the Red Banner in the competition. So far, 2001 was making a better showing than we were. They handled their nets better than we did—had better teamwork. That was our weak spot. They managed to shoot their nets and haul them in faster than we did. But we were doing better every trip—there was no gainsaying that. Maybe one day the captain of 2001 would be coming to me, as I did to him every now and again, and asking: "Look here, how do you do it?"

Just before May Day, the fishing boats would line up in the harbour in front of the pier. There would be visitors from the district Party committee and the Ministry. Our school band would play. The crews would line up on the decks. And the man from the Ministry would post up red stars in the most prominent place on the boat, one for each quarterly quota the crew had fulfilled. Our *TRB-2002* had three stars already. That meant we must add the fourth. We had already brought in many tons of fish over and above plan. I wondered where our beautifully packed smoked sprats had got to—to the Donbas miners, or maybe to the Siberians, or to people in the Urals. I thought it would have been fine to put a little note in the boxes of fish: "Dear Comrades. These sprats have been sent to you above target by the Latvian fishermen, Varapoga, Peldnagla, Augsts. . . ."

The full, black boundlessness of night gets one to thinking. Your thoughts dart far and wide like sea-gulls.

I thought I saw a ship's light ahead. Was it the *2001* fishing in her square? I opened the door of the pilot-house and peered into the darkness. I couldn't see anything ahead of us. But in the greenish light of the starboard lamp I saw a man standing at the rail. I couldn't see who it was at first. His face was turned away, and in the light of the lantern there was something wooden and unreal about him. The door banged against the wall. The man turned in my direction. It was Bruno Kaneps, our new windlass-man. I supposed he had come up to enjoy the night sea.

As I stood there at the tiller, I couldn't get Bruno Kaneps out of my head somehow. And a bit later when I opened the door again, he was still standing at the rail, this time looking closely at some paper he had in his hand, by the light of the lantern. I watched him a moment. He didn't notice me.

"Comrade Kaneps," I finally said, "don't you intend to turn in tonight? The sun'll be up soon."

Kaneps turned slowly towards me but didn't answer. He was so deep in thought that he seemed not to understand what I said.

"Sun . . .?" he said in surprise, ". . . so soon?"

There came a pause. It seemed to me that Kaneps had something on his mind, but I didn't want to ask him outright what the trouble was. He would tell me himself if he wanted to—the door of the pilot-house was open.

Kaneps did come in, but he wouldn't sit down, nor take the cigarette I offered him. And so we stood there silent for some time. I opened my mouth to say something about the catch, but thought better of it. Why talk just for the sake of talking? Sometimes a person just doesn't want to talk. But my visitor spoke up.

". . . Yes, he's really happy—has a wife. And they'll be having a baby now."

It was a moment before I realized it was our engineer, Augsts, he was talking about.

"Why shouldn't he be?" I said glancing at the compass. "Augsts is young—has his whole life before him."

Kaneps pulled a photograph out of his breast pocket. It must have been what he had been looking at out there on deck.

"How do you like her?"

I saw the face of a beautiful young woman; there was sadness and, it seemed to me, reproach in her eyes. You could look at a face like that for a long time.

"Your wife?" I asked.

"She *was*."

"Died?" I felt very sorry for him.

"No. . . . Why should you think she died?"

I was a little surprised—but who can say what may happen in a man's life? I swung the wheel over—we had veered off the course with my talking. Kaneps put the photograph back in his pocket.

"If only I could start all over again!" he sighed.

I felt there was more coming, and waited for him to go on. Turning away from him I stared at the compass though there was no need for it at the moment.

"We would have been together like other people," he went on, "but I had to go and spoil it all. Everything had come easy to me all my life. And when we were married I had the idea she was mine for good, no matter what I did. I took up with other women—was a real scoundrel to her. And finally she said, 'I'm not your wife any longer.' I just laughed it off. A little tiff between husband and wife—what of it? But after making a night of it once I came home to find her gone. It was then I realized what I had lost. Everything went to the dogs. I took to drinking—lost one job after another—and the only thing I could think of day or night was her."

No beating about the bush for me. So I said:

"You *have* been a rotter. Now you'll have to make up for it. You must ask her to forgive you. Show her how bad you feel."

Kaneps let his hands fall hopelessly.

"I've tried everything," he sighed. "She just can't forget. She's still fond of me, I know. . . . But she's closed her doors to me for good. I've thought it all out. You can't gather up spilt water."

I became conscious of the even beat of the engine. Even there on the bridge you felt its power—the way it sent the boat through the waves leaving a wake of white foam behind.

. . . Yes, a man had only one life to live. Here was Kaneps being sorry for himself, but it never occurred to him that he had ruined the life of a good woman. And she, too, had only one life. Kaneps had to learn that there were other people in the world besides himself—people with the same feelings as he, and, perhaps, even stronger feelings. But it was a good thing he had at last begun to think.

"You've robbed yourself," said I, "and spoiled another's life doing it. She's too good for you, I see."

"I know, but what can I do now?"

"You've got to learn to live. How old are you—thirty-two? Well, if you haven't found the right way yet, maybe life'll put you on it."

Whether he regretted he had been so frank with me, or whether I had been too sharp with him, I don't know, but in a moment, Kaneps left.

I felt tremendously sorry for him. It was a very unhappy figure that left the bridge with hunched shoulders and slow step. When I go out to sea I have my little skippers with me in spirit, and my wife stands beside me at the helm. I sail the sea with a light heart, day or night, in fair weather and foul. And I was a far from ideal husband and father. I hadn't bought the pig. I hadn't dug up the garden, I hadn't chopped the wood. But I was happy even so. And on top of that, if we had a chance to get the Red Banner, there wouldn't be a happier man on earth than I.

I didn't even notice when the sky began to get light.

Augusts came up out of the engine room, bareheaded, with a wad of oily waste in his hand. He stretched out his arms in the wind just as if he was greeting the dawn—I imagined he would have liked to hug the whole world. His shirt bellied out like a sail.

"Skipper!" he shouted, "hadn't we better begin?"

The sky was grey and heavy with rain clouds, but the splashes of water we shipped were clear. We had left the strip of muddy water far behind. I blew the siren, bringing all hands on deck.

"Weather's foul," Peldnagla remarked shrinking deeper into his pea-jacket and turning his back to the wind.

"You don't say," snapped Varapoga. "Just get busy now and swab down the deck. It's work keeps a sailor warm, not his coat. Don't you forget that."

3

From my post at the helm I watched the crew shoot the nets. All hands were on deck with Kaneps at the windlass. As the boat steamed slowly ahead, they paid them out at the stern. The nets splashed into the water leaving only a string of glass buoys on the surface. At last, a straight dotted line of buoys a mile long stretched out behind. When the signal to drift had been given, the men lighted up their pipes. There was an hour and a half or so to wait before we'd have a look at the net. And it had to be full of fish! We had to outstrip the 2001!

Priedite came to relieve me at the wheel. When Priedite first came to work with us he was a boorish, uncouth young fellow. I must admit I didn't like him. Even when he was walking with a girl, he never took his hands out of his pockets, and he was always annoying passers-by with stupid, loutish tricks of one kind or another.

"Nothing'll ever come of that lubber," the old fishermen used to say. But they were mistaken. Priedite was soon called up into service and the army made a new man of him. I would never have recognized him. Not only his behaviour was different; his very appearance and his way of talking were changed. After finishing a special courses, Priedite got to be a helmsman and joined the Comsomol. Now it looked as if he would get somewhere in life.

"My watch, Skipper," Priedite said as he came in.

The time came to haul in the nets. Kaneps started the windlass. The crew gathered at the rail, ready. Their eyes were on the water where the nets would

come up. The sea was rising and falling in a smooth swell, and not one of our hangers-on, the sea-gulls, was to be heard. A full net comes out of the water with a gratifying flipping and splashing. There was none of that this time.

There was no need for all to give a hand with the nets. They hauled in easily, and the whole catch consisted of half a dozen bullheads and a score or two of sprats.

We stood there on deck thinking what to do.

"Let's go to square nine," I said, "2001's had good luck there."

We'd got off to a bad start. I couldn't think of turning in till we'd got some kind of a catch. The horizon was dotted with fishing-boats. There must be fish somewhere hereabouts.

The next two tries we made were just as unsuccessful, and it was already past noon. I noticed some lowering glances thrown in my direction. The men looked pretty glum. And it was I that had decided where to fish. I'd obviously made a mistake. Peteris Eviedris, the net-man, paced gloomily up and down the deck. He was probably wondering if something was wrong with the nets. Were the meshes the wrong size? Or had we put them down too deep? Just try and find what the trouble was with the nets under water! But we'd had luck with the same ones before.

Quite unexpectedly, "Floating Nail" began to baulk. He had made the morning coffee and was told to make dinner. But he refused to peel the potatoes.

"Why bother?" he said spitefully. "You haven't hauled in enough fish to cover the bottom of a frying pan. Better head for home."

Varapoga's eyes almost popped out of his head at this defiance from his usually docile pupil. He hunted through his pockets for matches, and not finding any, just stood there, his unlighted cigarette in his mouth.

Eviedris looked at Peldnagla angrily, spat over the rail disgustedly and disappeared below. In a minute he came back with a bucket of potatoes, a kettle and a kitchen knife in his hands. Throwing a furious glance at the rebel he sat down by the pilot-house and began to peel potatoes.

None of us, except perhaps Varapoga, was in the mood for jokes right then. But Varapoga just laughed, and turning to the boy, he said loudly, so we could all hear:

"Hey, Nail, do you know which dog a rabbit is most scared of—a black or a white one?"

We pricked up our ears at this unexpected sally. Peldnalga looked at his mentor suspiciously, wondering how he was going to catch him this time. He shrugged his shoulders.

"You don't know?" Varapoga went on. "Then say so. I'll tell you which. A rabbit's more scared of a white dog. He thinks it has taken off its jacket so as to run faster and catch him."

Then, waiting for us to stop laughing, he continued:

"Once a rabbit dropped in at a pub. He took a drop too much and fell asleep at the table. While he was asleep, two bears wandered in. They got drunk and had a fight. They gave it to each other so hard they were both killed. When the

rabbit woke up he saw the two dead bears lying beside him. He shook his head and said: 'Well, well, I must have been going it strong last night to kill two of 'em at once.'"

Who ever would have believed that silly story would have perked the crew up so. Eviedris howled with laughter. Peldnagla was laughing so hard he shook as if he had the ague. In the midst of the guffaws, Varapoga put on an exaggerated frown and stamped his foot.

"What're you laughing at?" he roared. "This is no time for laughing: We haven't pulled in one fish."

That put everyone in a good humour. All hard feelings were whiffed away. We went about our work looking as if we had five tons of fish in the hold at least. Peldnagla gathered up the potatoes Eviedris had spilled and started peeling them. The rest of us had a consultation. We took soundings and the temperature reading, and with that, the direction of the wind and the information we'd been given in port to go on, we decided to change our course and head towards the floating ice. There must be fish thereabouts. We wouldn't go home with an empty hold.

I went below, and there in the cosy warmth I felt for the first time that I had not slept for two nights. A mug of hot coffee made my head turn and I barely managed to roll into my bunk before I was asleep.

I don't know how long I slept but I was wakened by the sound of low voices, the smell of fish soup and the clink of spoon against bowl.

"What're you going to call him?" I heard Eviedris ask in an undertone.

"Haven't thought about it yet," Augusts answered. "In our family they always name the children after the grandmother or grandfather."

"Then it'll be Eustace or Trina or something like that. . . ."

"That's no good," Varapoga boomed. "Too old-fashioned. Take 'Juris.' It's the best name there is."

"Because it's yours, I suppose. But it might be a girl."

"But I tell you it'll be a boy—dead sure. Mark my words."

There was a pause; the rattle of dishes and spoons continued.

"It's not so long since we were kids ourselves," Eviedris remarked, "and now, look—fathers already."

"Where do you come in, by the way?" another voice remarked.

"I mean in general." And Eviedris went on to tell about the doings of his neighbours' boys. "Don't you worry, Augusts, your kid'll be just the same."

"When he grows up I'm going to send him to the university—the one on the Lenin Hills in Moscow."

"Don't be in such a hurry—he isn't born yet."

"What of it? If he isn't born yet, he *will* be born. And when he grows up, he'll go to school."

"When I remember the schooling I had!" Varapoga sighed. "Sh-sh-sh," somebody said. Varapoga simply couldn't keep his voice down.

"My father was a sailor—he was always away on long voyages—only got home once a year. And every time he came he stood all us kids up in a row, pulled

off his belt and gave each of us a walloping for all we'd done and for all we were liable to do the rest of the year. I was the eldest and stood at the head of the line so I got the worst of it generally. By the time my old man got to the end of the line his arm was pretty tired. That's all the schooling I ever got. What're you snickering for, Nail? Don't you know you mustn't laugh at your elders? I told you that so you'd understand how much better times are now. And if you don't study and get skipper's papers you're no friend of mine. Mark my words!"

The siren blew. It was time to haul in. Footsteps clattered up the companionway, then all was still. Little by little, I slipped into sleep again, lulled by the gentle rocking of the boat. The faces of my three little skippers floated before me in the haze of my dreams, and then I saw them going to school in a palace.

The night was long past, but the new day came on unwillingly, pale and gloomy after the struggle to come into its own. A heavy fog lay over the water. Our boat sped along, splitting the silence with its siren. Now and then, the white cap of a chunk of ice appeared like a ghost bobbing on the surface of the water ahead. A loud splashing broke the stillness as our boat beat against it in passing. The cold from the ice pierced to the marrow and there was no refuge from it.

All night we had been stubbornly shooting the nets and hauling them in every three hours. We had taken in about a ton and a half of fish, but we were all hoping against hope for a real catch, say, three or four tons at once. Our catch looked pretty small beside the *2901*'s, though we had reached our target.

When I was back at the tiller again, Eviedris came into the pilot-house. His slicker, rubber boots and fore-and-aft cap were dripping wet as if he'd just had a dip in the water.

"Skipper, I forgot to tell you—the *Dolphin* of Leningrad called at port the other day."

"I heard."

"She was coming from Ventspils and had fished the strait on the way."

"Yes?"

"She brought in eleven tons of sprat."

"Eleven tons! That's luck for you! But the *Dolphin*'s a lot bigger than us."

"That isn't the point, Skipper," Eviedris went on. "I didn't have a chance to talk to any of the *Dolphin*'s crew, but I heard some Estonian fishermen say the Leningraders don't use ready-made nets. They've got people who make nets to catch any kind of fish. The whole secret's in the size of the meshes. We've only been using drift-nets a few years. But they've been at it I don't know how long. It'd be a good thing to ask one of those *Dolphin* men to come on board and teach us how to make the right nets. Then we'd always have the Red Banner."

"The rest of our boats could do the same, don't forget."

"But they haven't yet. . . . Somebody's got to begin. . . ."

Eviedris' suggestion struck me as a good one. We'd have to look for new methods. Marking time wouldn't get us anywhere. I must get in touch with somebody from the *Dolphin*. If someone would come out on a run with us, it

would be fine. And it was perfectly possible. We were neighbours after all, and we fished in the same Baltic Sea.

Eviedris opened the door of the pilot-house. From the fog far ahead of us came the sound of a siren. We gave the answering signal. Soon the outlines of a fishing-boat rose up ahead. It passed by so quickly that I barely had time to make out that it was *2001*. But she heaved round and came up alongside.

You could see the crew of the *2001* were in high spirits. The deck was piled up with boxes and all of them were full. I quickly figured up in my head how much fish they had on board. The *2001* had got ahead of us again!

The captain of *2001*, a youngish chap, quick of movement and of speech, called out: "How's it going?"

"A ton and a half or so, so far," I shouted back.

"We've five at least. But what're you mucking about here for? We spent the morning here—had all our trouble for nothing till we went further out. Sail straight northwest an hour and forty minutes exactly and then shoot your nets."

"You struck luck there, but . . ."

"Struck luck? Just hit the tail of a good shoal and found our oil running low. We'll be lucky if we get to port. You couldn't lend us a bucket or two, could you?"

Our two smacks were close together and I couldn't have helped hearing the request. I kept silent.

"Well? How about it? How's your oil holding out?"

"Oil? We'd be glad to help you out, but I don't even know how much we have ourselves. What if we're running out? Augsts! How much oil have you got there?"

Augsts dived below. When he came up again, I saw from his face that we had plenty. If I said "no," he'd say the same. I was skipper after all, and why should we supply other boats with oil? They should have seen to it they had enough before they sailed. And hadn't they already taken in five tons?

I was sorely tempted but I said "yes."

As the buckets of oil passed from deck to deck, the captain shouted out the tally.

"Thanks," he sang out as *2001* drew away. "Now we can do some more fishing. We'll pay you back when we get home."

"Home! Home!" Varapoga grumbled "—at home even straw's fuel!"

Again the stillness of fog and sea. We shifted our course for the northwest, leaving the floating ice behind in the fog. If *2001* hadn't fooled us we should get a good catch—a good catch! I couldn't get the thought of it out of my head. *2001* had better look to her laurels. We were going to keep right on her heels.

The day wore on in our usual round of duties. Several times we made tries where *2001* had told us to, but had no better luck than in the morning. After dinner, the fog began to thin and when it finally cleared away, we could see fishing boats here and there on the horizon. One of them might be *2001*. She had enough of oil now.

When I came up on deck to take my watch, I found the whole crew

gathered round the windlass. The net line was stretched to the limit. It twanged like a violin string when the net-man kicked it to see how tight it was.

"Looks as if the net's fouled something." There was concern in his voice. "If we manage to get it out whole we'll be lucky."

Could the nets have got caught on a rock or a sunken wreck of the last war? It was too deep here, I was sure. Nevertheless, I looked all round at the fishing-smacks in the distance to see if I couldn't catch a glimpse of *2001*.

I gave the order to start the windlass going again. Slowly, slowly, the warp was drawn in on the drum, turn by turn. The whole crew were hanging over the rail in suspense.

The end of the first net showed in the water, and as it rose we saw—wonder of wonders, a solid shimmering mass of wildly fluttering tails the like of which I'd never seen in my life. The crew were beside themselves with excitement.

A whole flock of sea-gulls darted towards the boat as if from nowhere. But before the net had got a yard out of the water, it sank out of sight again. Varapoga barely had time to make the line fast and prevent it from slipping away entirely. But the gulls had seen it. Several swooped down on a dead sprat left on the surface, making a terrific uproar with their screaming and fighting.

The deck was cleared for action. We split up into teams. The work of shaking the fish out of the nets began.

Far over five hours, we toiled in the freezing cold. The water ran down our sleeves and splashed in our faces. It made icicles of our eyebrows and lashes, and boards of our slickers. Fish scales covered our hands, our clothes, our faces. There was fish everywhere.

When one team was played out another took over. Wet to the skin, tired, aching with cold, deafened by the shrieks of the gulls and the flapping of their wings in our very faces, we worked on, thinking of nothing but stowing away the fish to the very last one.

When dusk fell, we switched on the searchlight in the bow so we could see. It turned our smack into shining silver, made emeralds of the drops on the net and a boundless blackness of the sea. At last our hold and all boxes were full.

We had barely finished our work when we sighted a boat in the offing. We'd been too busy to notice it before. It was a sizeable craft judging by its lights. As it came nearer we made out a big seiner. And it was heading straight for us. Our lights were on, not to mention the searchlight which threw its ray far ahead into the sea, but the seiner kept coming right for us.

"She's gone plumb crazy," Varapoga shouted. And he turned the searchlight full on the seiner. At that moment, it swung round and we saw the name *Dolphin* in big letters on her bow.

"The *Dolphin*'s bound for Ventspils," our net-man remarked.

Here the *Dolphin* turned her searchlight on us, blinding us completely. For a moment we couldn't see a thing. It was dark as a pocket all round. Then the rays of the searchlights of the two boats met forming a bridge of light between them. The crew of the *Dolphin* were crowded at the rail. They were waving to us. A speaking trumpet in one of their hands flashed in the light.

"A bo-o-y—it's a bo-o-oy!" came the call.

And so, across the dark expanse of water, rising above the even hum of the engines, a voice came to us announcing the birth of a man. The sea seemed to hear that voice; the waves took it up and carried it on their crests far and wide, to distant dark shores—to the very boundary of the Soviet State, which forms an invisible line cutting across the Baltic Sea to the west.

"A boy!" the voice repeated, "—Augusts Ozolin has a boy! Congratulations from Avotins and all of us!"

Augusts threw himself against the rail as if he wanted to rush out on that bridge of light to the other boat. He cupped his hands round his mouth and shouted at the top of his lungs:

"Ahoy! Leningraders! Thanks!"

The rest of us caught up the cry. That was a moment of sheer good-will I can never forget.

The bridge of light broke. The *Dolphin* sailed away in the dark leaving us rolling in her wake. As we stood there watching her go, I noticed Bruno Kaneps step to one side away from our jubilant little group. He stood motionless gazing at the lights of the seiner getting smaller and smaller till they were like tiny stars in the distance. His face was pale, his jaw set. I felt very sorry for him. I thought I knew what he was thinking at that moment.

Varapoga hugged Augusts like a boy. "Remember what I told you, huh?" he kept saying. "Varapoga was the first to tell you you'd have a son, wasn't he? I told you, didn't I?"

I decided this was the moment for a drink, all the more so that we were wet and frozen to the marrow.

"Varapoga, go below and get that vodka we keep for emergencies—all of it. Here's the key. And don't forget some mugs."

Varapoga lost no time about it. He was back before we knew it with our emergency ration of vodka. I poured it into the mugs and proposed a toast.

"Comrades, here's to the new Soviet man! Here's to the health of Augusts' son! May he grow up hale and hearty!"

We drank the next toast to *2001*. I regretted I had had hard feelings even for a moment about comrades we were competing with to give the country more fish. Our *2002* was in the lead again, but the competition would go on. We had the next quarter's quota to fulfil now. And *2001* needn't bother to return our oil. Though the sea was broad, fishing-boats met often. Who could tell? Maybe we might need to borrow oil from her some day.

Our *2002* was splitting the dark waters at full speed, the waves spreading out fanwise at her stern.

We were bound home.

Translated by Jeanette Kittell

LITERATURE AND THE ARTS

Vladimir DNEPROV

METHOD AND STYLE IN ART

THE change in artistic method, the replacement of certain forms by others in the history of world art is conditioned by fundamental social changes, by the environment in which the different classes live and act, by the level of knowledge that mankind has reached, and by the new tasks which face art in given circumstances.

Different artistic methods come into conflict and some of them become dominant, while others are relegated to a secondary position. This concept was first accepted in aesthetics in the beginning of the 19th century, during the battle between romanticism and classicism which followed the French Revolution; it was later confirmed by the victory of critical realism over romanticism in practically all the literatures of Europe.

Today the arts have once again become a wide battleground.

The defenders of the "peaceful coexistence of artistic methods" are chiefly concerned that there should be no enforced uniformity of form, that the search for new ways of expression should not be blocked, that the individuality and personality of artists and writers, their own "vision of the world" should be expressed, that there should be no "dominant" genres or obligatory traditions. We Soviet critics are in complete agreement with all these aims but strongly disagree with the identification of *method* and *style*, with the assertion that a uniformity of *method* leads to a uniformity of *style*.

Method implies unity, and style the variety of forms of art. Method is the genus and style the species. Styles are the variety of facets and sides—the possibilities offered by the method as applied to a given theme by individual artists. An artistic method is the sole pivot around which various styles revolve. We can speak of classical, romantic and realistic styles. The very different styles of Balzac and Flaubert are both critical realism, just as the different styles of Mayakovsky's and Tvardovsky's poetry are both socialist realism. Styles form the total wealth of artistic development only in their interrelation, in the integration of their individual features. Chekhov and Saltykov-Shchedrin represent different styles of critical realism, but both these styles are necessary, and without either one of them the method would be the poorer.

However, the relation between method and style changes with different stages of artistic development. In the classical method the dominating trait was idealization as a means of artistic generalization, and the artistic interpretation of the subject followed the accepted canons of beauty. Hence, there arose a *common style* which prevailed in the work of different artists, imposing certain principles of form upon them. Of course, the individuality of the artist was expressed then, too, but *within* the common style and within the limits of the common form. If, as was the case with Molière, the writer steps outside these limits, it is an indication of the approaching collapse of the style.

We are perfectly justified in speaking not only of the stability of artistic expression in relation to life inherent in classicism, but also in speaking of the stability of stylistic characteristics of classical form. Classical style can be defined and in recent years dozens of books have been published showing the characteristics of this style. Classical style finds expression not only in architecture or the ballet, but also in poetry, so that it is possible to define the manifestation of its common form. The artist of the classical period is bound by the discipline of a style which is common to all and dominates over the individual differences of content and form. Style is the principle of the *similitude* of artistic form.

In the same way, in medieval art at a certain stage of its development the Gothic style played a dominating role. The relation between the basic catholic ideology of medieval art and the *dominating principle* of Gothic form, that is, refined loftiness and soaring heights, have frequently been remarked. Like an enormous stone symbol the Gothic cathedral embodies the awe and rapture with which man looked on God. The stone sweeps upwards in all the mass of its dissected forms, piercing the heavens with its spire. Each part of the building, each fragment fulfils its function by its own form, but *more than this*, it has, of necessity, to express the common form of the building. The lines of the windows are not only determined by their special function of lighting the building; they are also subject to the general movement of the form. If the lines do not fall with sufficient force into the general harmony, then the window is in addition set in a frame of carved triangular pediments. Vertical lines prevail and the columns, in addition to their primary function of supporting the building, branch out like trees and seem to grow into the vaulting.

But what is of great importance for us is that the Gothic principle of vertical lines and the complicated dissection of form which was dominant in the prevailing taste spread not only to secular architecture, not only to sculpture and painting, but even to objects of daily use, so that we find Gothic cut to clothes and shoes, a Gothic script. In style there is a duality of form. On the one hand, it is defined by its own concrete content, and on the other hand, it bears the characteristics of the common form reflecting the fundamental idea and purpose of art. The common style corresponds to the epochs when normative functions predominate in art. Style surrounds man, speaking the language of a thousand habitual things, and constantly exercises a strong aesthetic influence; character and taste are moulded under the constant pressure of style.

In its attitude to style realism is based on principles very different from those of the pre-realist methods. It is not idealized images that predominate in realism, but the typical ones. It is not only people that acquire typical characteristics, but events and even inanimate objects. The subject is no longer expressed according to idealist canons, but, on the contrary, the artist considers it his task to understand the *particular laws inherent in the given object* and makes his artistic presentation in accordance with them. Artistic content itself is broadened to an extreme degree: it includes, besides beauty and ugliness, the vast field of everyday life which is beyond the artistic interpretation by the old aesthetic means.

In this connection, the means used begin to depend more and more on the specific structure of the subject, on the artists' individual understanding and interpretation of life and events, and finally, on the combination of the objective and the subjective in a work of art.

The growing pressure of various approaches and means finally breaks down, explodes and destroys the predominance of the common style. *Realism is a method, not a style*. That cannot be denied. No one can point to any common formal characteristics of critical realist literature. In fact, no attempts have ever been made to define "realistic style." It might be said that it is distinguished by the great similitude between the subject and its expression—but there is the fact that artistic convention or fantasy can perfectly well be a form of expression in realism. It might be said that realism means laconism—but there is the fact that a number of great realists were exceptionally successful in extensive narration. Realism has proved its ability to hold its own and yet use various means and forms, including classical, romantic, or symbolical stylistic ones, when they are naturally suited to the subject.

Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky are realists, but from the point of view of style they are so different that the manuals quote them as examples of contrasting styles. Today the critics speak of the style of a given author and this is a true expression of the development brought about by the epoch of realistic art. In the pre-realist methods a *common* style prevailed, which greatly influenced each artist's approach to form, but with the realist method the *individual* style predominates.

Let us take the example of Dostoyevsky. Here the character of the content and the harmony of the author's tone and viewpoint is clearly seen in the similarity of the forms used. All the artistic elements, from the choice of words and rhythm to the characterization and the plot possess common characteristics of style which make it possible to recognize Dostoyevsky's writing at once.¹

¹ The difference which we have outlined here is of importance for the *historical* change in artistic methods and also for the general *system* of the arts as well. Such arts as, let us say, architecture or the ballet, where the normative function predominates, and where ideal images rule supreme, cannot abandon a *common* style. The destruction of the unity of style in architecture entails the destruction of a great art and the supreme rule of eclectics. In this case the method must be expressed in the common architectural style while the individuality is expressed *within* the limits of this common style.

Trends in realistic art are formed on the basis of common characteristics of style. If the relation between writers who are close as to content, tendencies and their perception of life is *also* expressed in the use of common stylistic means, then a stylistic school is beginning to emerge. In this way the Gogol school of Russian literary realism was founded. The fact that this school included such writers as Dostoyevsky in his early period, or Saltykov-Shchedrin, is not only definitely established by literary criticism but is born out by the aesthetic sense of every reader. The characteristics of the Gogol school were noted by Belinsky as follows: the sharp manifestation of the writer's "subjectivity," the typical humour of which Gogol said "laughter that the world sees and tears that it does not see and is not aware of," the approach to the established way of life from the point of view of its "unreality" and its "illusiveness."

These characteristics which determine the whole of the *stylistic* structure are maintained and developed in Saltykov-Shchedrin's works. "I considered the aspects of family, property and state," he wrote, "and made it known that in reality none of these things exist." He used a wealth of stylistic means such as artistic suggestion, the mingling of everyday events with fantasy and the grotesque to serve the main poetical idea of the "non-existence of some so-called things or concepts." How different all this is from Tolstoy who brings our feelings of reality to the greatest heights; with extraordinary power of imagery he brings before our eyes a world so fresh it might have been washed clean by rain, full of fragrance and colour, and the more beautiful and *real* the world, the more unnatural and unbearable the evil creeping over it.

The realistic method sets free the initiative of the artist to invent new forms and creates an enormous wealth of styles, genres and trends. The attempts to identify forcibly contemporary realism with one or other of its styles, or to pick out from it some special "privileged" genres are manifestations of narrow-mindedness. One of the characteristics of realism is precisely that it offers freedom of artistic form that did not and could not exist earlier. I am convinced, for example, that Tvardovsky's *Vasili Tyorkin*, however much it differs in style from Neruda's *Canto General*, tackles the tasks of contemporary art in no lesser degree, and here we can and should speak of the "normal and equal" trends in socialist realism. The best Italian films are in quite a different style from Chaplin's, but they both show the characteristic features of 20th-century critical realism.

The original work of the German realist Bertolt Brecht has won world recognition. In his plays we feel the sweep of life, the vastness of time, the scope of history, more fully than we did with the old dramatists. In Brecht's work true realism is allied to great power of fantasy, and allegory takes on an important role. The all-round presentation of life and people is combined with artistic suggestion, everyday events are mingled with fantasy, historical episodes with burning present-day issues, tragedy with street clowning, epic action with the lyrical qualities of the characters. Brecht boldly uses all these contrasts; and in this lies the novelty of his style. He continually and skilfully creates the dramatic illusion of reality and at the same time continually breaks this illusion. He makes extremely wide use of historical and artistic association in order to

give the audience the feeling of seeing two historical periods simultaneously, thus heightening our comprehension of the contemporary world. In Mother Courage's son we see both the mercenary of the Thirty Years' War and the young fascist of the Hitler Youth, and here the two historical phenomena are compared in one character. Brecht brings the element of epic narration to the stage, and in this actually departs from the Aristotelean principles of drama. And everywhere we feel the *author's own personality*, a personality which is deeply influenced by revolutionary ideals. Brecht's art is a weapon in the fight for the liberation of the working people from the power of deceit, from the burden of obsolete concepts and philistine prejudices. His plays seek to widen people's outlook and horizons, to create the necessary departure from stagnant routine, to give a sudden turn to reality that surprises the spectator, alarms him and plunges him into the unknown (however he bases all this on reality so that the spectator knows that this is life and not fantasy, or moralizing), and thereby he seeks to bring the spectator to the correct viewpoint, to daring and honest thought, to revolutionary decision.

Brecht is concerned more than anything else with showing the difference between a man who meekly submits to oppression, who has no idea of his own responsibility for the ruling evil, who is not aware that the general system of life depends (though in small measure but in a quite real one) upon him, and the man who actively fights for the liberation of mankind.

Some of Brecht's statements lead us to believe that he considers his style as the artistic realization of the dialectic understanding of the world. This conception is based on a misunderstanding. Brecht is quite right, when he says that the elements of his plays are based on dialectical opposites. However, this alone does not in the least characterize his style as *differing* from other socialist realist styles. We could just as easily say that Stanislavsky's system is based on dialectical relations.

What is more, *every* genuine artistic image, whether realist, classical or romantic, is built up dialectically. One of the main merits of Hegel's aesthetics lies in the fact that it demonstrated the impossibility of formal thought in art and clearly showed that all artistic images are made up of opposites.

Brecht himself considered his style as one of the many trends of realism. He wrote: "Not the concept of narrowness, but the concept of wideness fits realism; when we see the variety of forms that can be used for the presentation of reality we are convinced that in general realism is not a question of form. Nothing can do more harm than when some kind of models are suggested and too few models are offered. Nothing can be more dangerous than to have the great concept of realism monopolized by a few names, however remarkable they may be, and to consider a few styles to be the only possible creative method."¹

And again: "The realist manner of writing can be distinguished from the non-realistic one only if it is compared with the reality that it describes. There are no special formulae for this which have to be observed."

¹My italics. V. D.

This conception can justly be applied to Brecht's own style.

Arthur Miller, another prominent modern dramatist, takes quite a different road from Brecht. Brecht departs from the Aristotelean principles of drama, while Miller shows the new possibilities of these principles. Brecht opens wide the conventional boundaries of the stage, while Miller chooses a smaller field of vision. Brecht is concerned with the attitude of man towards the times he lives in, but he is not greatly concerned with the inner conflicts of his characters. Miller however is greatly moved by these conflicts and often shows the inner struggle of an individual. Brecht seeks to combine the force and depth of artistic impressions with the tranquillity of contemplation. Miller concentrates on great emotion and real catharsis. Brecht portrays unusual circumstances, but emotionally his people are situated on the plane of everyday life; Miller chooses the most humdrum situation but builds up the emotion of the characters to fever heat.

However, it would be a great mistake to consider it necessary to make a choice between either Brecht's style or Miller's. This would be just as absurd as asserting that the general laws of nature cannot be learned by the profound study of minute particles of matter but only by the study of huge masses of matter. In relation to Miller's plays we can use Turgenev's words: they burn and sting. You feel almost physical pain when you see the cruelty and stupidity of property-owning society portrayed by the author, the corruption of man by the base passions of the egoists, the monstrous indifference to man's feelings.

Neither Brecht's nor Miller's style exclude one another. If we were to imagine for a moment that all modern plays were written in Brecht's style, then it would immediately become clear how impoverished realism would be if one style was given preferential treatment.

Equally untrue is the frequently repeated assertion that modern art necessarily demands *evocative laconism of the means of representation* and not complete exterior similitude. Sometimes the nature of content and the character of the author's approach to his material preclude the use of allegory or the use of evocative artistic means, and in that case complete similitude is essential. Realism needs complete exterior similitude when this facilitates the representation of the deep processes that have matured under cover of everyday happenings, when details take on a general significance. In other words, the search for exterior similitude is quite acceptable for realism as long as the poetical idea of the work is brought out by this means.

When Henri Barbusse wanted to speak of the imperialist world war, he understood that the "language" of fantasy, symbolism and suggestion had to be discarded. The war had to be described in all its authentic reality, even to the extent of "naturalistic" detail. Grim exactitude and almost documentary truth were essential to fulfil the mission of fighting against war. Is there anyone who would dare to speak of Barbusse's book as "photographic" when, having overcome the difficulty of describing war, it "transported" millions of people into the trenches to see the full horror of the soldier's life?

The description of physical torment has always been considered the crudest naturalism. But fascism brought torment and torture to hundreds of thousands

of the finest people whose fight, whose victory over pain, whose stoicism in the medieval torture-chambers lends poetic force to the picture of physical suffering. Literature that would refuse to accompany its heroes into solitary confinement and gas-wagons would not deserve to be called realistic.

Together with this we can consider perfectly legitimate such procedures of realist art as the conscious retreat from exterior similitude, the use of suggestion and the fantastic. But it is necessary to bear in mind that in realism the violation of exterior similitude, the use of suggestion and the fantastic is not conditioned by the arbitrary, subjective choice of the artist; it depends on an objective logic, subject to the task of drawing a picture which must bear an essential likeness to reality, of enriching the picture with the artist's thought, his attitude to the reality he draws.

In H. G. Wells' book *The War of the Worlds* the fantastic is an aspect, a feature of reality. The fantastic reflects the irrationality, the surprise shock of the gigantic events so ruinous for the Little Man under capitalism: it reflects catastrophic changes in the perception of reality so that what actually exists is perceived as a terrible nightmare. Here fantasy helps to lend a wider understanding of reality than mere observation of the ordinary run of life would. The shattering of petty ideals is a great theme, and Wells develops it by introducing the fantastic into everyday life.

Only with great *elasticity* of form and *wealth* of styles can art satisfy the demands of our time, with its sharp turn of events, speedy changes of customs, characters and relations, the innumerable combinations of historical tendencies, tasks and conditions.

Sectarianism in art is inadmissible and this is especially so when the 20th-century realist movement is becoming in the true meaning of the word, a *world* movement. One of the main characteristics of 20th-century art is that the *elaboration* (and not merely the assimilation) of the form of modern realism is accomplished with the participation of China, India, Brazil, Japan, Chile, Cuba, Australia and many other countries outside Europe. *For the first time* a worldwide movement of the arts is coming into being. Realism cannot develop in China or India on the basis of the experience of European art alone, without the utilization of the thousand-year-old national traditions of these countries, and vice versa. Art will unavoidably find its own paths of transition, rich in the diversity of style.

In the work of the great Chinese writer Lu Hsun the peculiarities of the thousand-year-old national form are intermingled in an original way with the achievements of European realist literature. We find extraordinary mastery in the economy of figurative means characteristic of Chinese art, and the refinement of form filled with the associations of an ancient culture and polished sharpness of expression. It is Chinese literature not merely because of the topics chosen but also because of the manner in which they are treated.

When he affirms that his works do not need a background, detailed descriptions or long dialogues, Lu Hsun is referring to the Chinese traditions of the absence of décor in the theatre, the representation of only the main characters in

coloured prints, and so on. The links between artistic form and cultural tradition are continually felt.

On the other hand, Lu Hsun brought to China the experience of European literature with its great theme of the sufferings and humiliation of the people. *To tell the truth about Chinese life, to awaken revolutionary energy in the people, Chinese art had to take the road of modern realism.* And Lu Hsun founded his own realistic style. By their economy of language, his short stories make one aware of the vastness of the living material behind them; his short sketches reveal the interminable tale of the wretchedness of hundreds of millions of people in old China. The excellently drawn portraits reproduce national characteristics moulded by history and the national psychology of his people who "grew up during 4,000 years in silence, withering like grass under a huge and heavy stone."

Lu Hsun does more than just paint the Chinese character; though it pains him, he criticizes all that went into its make-up under the influence of centuries of enslavement. The drama in Lu Hsun's work is built up by the ever-present revolutionary energy, the force of the wrath and protest against the oppression of man by man which is brought to the reader through the restrained tone and the character of the narrative. There is not the slightest touch of sentimentality. The austere restraint is like a drop in which all the author's violent and passionate feeling is concentrated and condensed. Passionate but restrained emotion is the formula of Lu Hsun's style. When iron self-discipline can no longer keep back the groans of pain, the cries of wrath, these passages make an indelible impression.

Chian Chao-ho's splendid picture *Refugees* shows in painting how organic is the synthesis of Chinese aesthetic traditions and realism, expressed in Lu Hsun's writing. With a similar trend of style we have here a great work of art which can be compared with the best examples of 20th-century painting in Europe.

To say that the style of Lu Hsun or of Chian Chao-ho is less original, modern or important than the European realist styles would be a manifestation of backwardness and provincialism. Our aesthetic outlook should embrace the variety of realist styles developing in all parts of the world—Mexican frescoes and engravings, Chilean and Cuban poetry and other examples of art (such as the picture of the horror of Hiroshima painted by the Japanese artists Toshiko Akamatsu and Iri Maruki), the Indian cinema, and many other fine works of realist art.

The modernists who seek to establish one "modern style" defining it by formal characteristics, display their intolerance and narrow-mindedness. Only the method of realism can be the foundation for the flowering of a great abundance and variety of artistic styles, for the true freedom of artistic form.

Socialist realism does not shape all the variety of art on one last. On the contrary, if it is to fulfil its mission it must have an unprecedented variety of form and style. Lenin said that the historical movements which formed the wide and deep flow of the Socialist Revolution were heterogeneous, springing from different sources and different times; he said that different sections of the people took part in the Revolution, each bringing their own social experience, habits and the treasure-house of national originality. Now, as never before, the deep

significance of Lenin's thought is clear. We ourselves see not only the inter-relation of the Communist movements with the democratic and liberation movement of colonial peoples, not only the striking multiplicity of the conditions of the struggle and the tasks facing it; but also the grandiose picture of many socialist countries in different stages of the transition to and the creation of the socialist system. We see how distinctive is the way of socialist transformation in ideas, morals, and psychology for every social strata of the working people.

The artistic reflection of the progress of this change in the milieu of the Cossacks in Sholokhov's work and in the milieu of the most cultured of the old intellectuals in Leonov's work could lead only to the formation of sharply differing styles of socialist realism. Neruda's *Canto General* is a socialist *Iliad* of the South-American people. In it the creation of a heroic epic coincides with the birth of socialist realist art. Such great artists as Mayakovsky and Shostakovich came to socialist realism in the bitter battle to overcome the influence of modernism and their styles bear the imprint of the battle and of their victory. Louis Aragon and Martin Andersen Nexø represent different styles of socialist realism in literature, not only in relation to the different artistic traditions that they utilize in their work, but in relation to the message they bring. Fučík's immortal book which shows a real man was stylistically born of circumstances when the hidden essence of man is laid bare and the only choice is to be a coward or a hero.

Marx regarded the all-round development of personality one of the main aims of socialism, the first phase of the new social system. Here Marx meant certainly not the outstanding individuals who rise from the ranks of the people, but the intellectual progress of those who make up the people as a whole. We know from experience how difficult and varied is the way of intellectual advancement when it is a question of millions of people, and how rich art must be in form, genre, emotion and style in order to mould a fully developed socialist personality.

MAXIM GORKY'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH FOREIGN WRITERS

(From unpublished sources)

MAXIM GORKY'S contacts with the outside world were wide and versatile. Letters to him from public men, writers, journalists, teachers, artists, actors, workers, newspaper and magazine editors are gathered in the Gorky Archives. Miscellaneous to a remarkable degree, they range in subject-matter from discussions in philosophic and aesthetic problems to simple-hearted requests for autographs.

In that voluminous correspondence there are over 450 letters from foreign writers, literary critics and publicists; about a hundred of them from Romain Rolland. Gorky's own letters number about 200, approximately half of which are to Romain Rolland. With few exceptions, the letters Gorky received from abroad were never published; of his own letters, the lesser part have seen print.¹

Unfortunately, the Archives' collection, as regards the letters of Gorky himself, is far from complete. We hope, however, that with the growth of cultural relations between the Soviet Union and other lands, this gap will be filled. In response to inquiries, the Archives have received in the course of but the last few months a number of Gorky's letters from Japan, Norway, Czechoslovakia, Italy and Argentinia.

Romain Rolland, Henri Barbusse, Victor Margueritte, Stefan Zweig, Gerhart Hauptmann, Heinrich Mann, Thomas Mann, Johannes R. Becher, Franz Hellens, Upton Sinclair, Theodore Dreiser, Herbert Wells, Bernard Shaw, Georgi Bakalov, Selma Lagerlöf, Knut Hamsun and Martin Andersen Nexö—such is the list of writers, incomplete at that, with whom Gorky was in contact.

The letters stand out for their various views on literature and art, some of them exceptionally interesting and original, as well as biographical data on the lives of Gorky and the most outstanding pens abroad.

These letters bear evidence to the authority Gorky, a conspicuous figure in the struggle for justice and a great creative thinker, carried with writers abroad.

¹ A large volume devoted to the correspondence between Gorky and literary men abroad, as well as a special edition of his correspondence with Rolland, only part of which were included in the aforesaid volume, is to be put out soon by the Institute of World Literature of the U.S.S.R., Academy of Sciences. Chronologically extensive, these letters embrace a period from the early 20th century till the last days of the great writer's life.

In one of his letters to Gorky, the Argentine writer Alberto Maritano writes: "In Argentina we love to read your works. . . . *Mother*—the book of the revolution—moved us tremendously. But it is not merely for love of your books that we admire you. We admire you for your selflessness and sincerity, your untiring struggle in behalf of the proletariat. We love you for the same reasons as we love Rolland, not only because you are a great writer but because you are a great and noble person as well." (November 21, 1935).

Sincere and heartfelt emotions permeate the letters of the Bulgarian critic Georgi Bakalov. "Thanks to the similarity between our languages and to the peculiarities of our Renaissance," he writes, "Bulgaria's spiritual development is to a certain extent an abbreviated recurrence of the Russian trends of thought. This can be said of no other country but Bulgaria. Therefore, dear comrade, when I tell you that the working masses of Bulgaria consider you their own, their closest, most intimate, most intelligible, most beloved writer, this is not an exaggeration." (April 7, 1928).

Gorky is more than a brilliant narrator, says Thomas Mann in one of his letters, he is "a highly moral figure, the spokesman of our social conscience; he belongs to an intellectual society in Europe whose members, though personally dissociated on the most part, have long since found each other in the upper spheres and have long ago attained in spirit the unity which this part of the world is still seeking and struggling for; he belongs to a community of highly differentiated individuals as concerns nationality and personality but who, when the need arises, are prepared to step forward in unanimous protest against injustice, lack of culture and dishonesty." (March 1, 1928).

It goes without saying that Gorky's conceptions and those of his pen-friends do not always coincide. But it is to Gorky that they confide their most sacred thoughts and feelings. The scholar in literature, and in West-European literature first and foremost, is sure to find in these letters traces of the ideological quests of their authors.

2

Of particular interest is the correspondence between Gorky and Romain Rolland, Henri Barbusse and Stefan Zweig.

Gorky's correspondence with Romain Rolland which went on for twenty years (from 1916 till 1936, i.e. till Gorky's death) is an event of great importance in epistolary literature. Their letters are remarkable for content; they reflect the evolution of outlook of the two men and are a literary monument to their friendship.

For Rolland Gorky was more than a great writer; appearing "at the wane of winter and the birth of spring," he represented a new age in world history. Rolland fully realized Gorky's significance in the development of cultural relations between Soviet Russia and Europe. "Like a lofty arc you stand between two worlds—the new and the old, between Russia and the West," he wrote in his letter of March 18, 1918.

Rolland's remarks concerning Gorky's works are subtle and incisive. In the spring of 1933, after reading the beginning of *The Life of Klim Samgin* (the part which describes Samgin's childhood and youth until his departure for St. Petersburg), he expressed the following views on the hero of the novel: "I am quite certain that he is going to turn traitor whether he wants to or not (or thinks that he wants to); still worse, he may turn out a faltering, lying, half-way traitor who entertains illusions as to the nobleness of his heart (hardly believing it to be true and secretly disgusted with himself)."

What a splendid description of this weak-willed, spineless, self-centred person who is a traitor at heart notwithstanding his outward respectability!

Rolland's letter of August 3, 1923, reflects the delight he experienced upon reading Gorky's *Childhood* and essays on Tolstoy, Chekhov and others; charming works of art he calls them.

Rolland's letters throw light on his searches for new ways and reflect the processes he underwent before becoming a fighter against reactionary forces; namely this is what is most interesting about them. At a time when the sinister shadow of fascism overhung Europe and war was impending, this intercourse with Gorky was of great importance to Rolland. With increasing vigour and firmness he declares his hatred for fascism; he criticizes the liberal intelligentsia of the West for its inertness and egoism. His letters also reflect his growing sympathy for the Soviet Union.

It is interesting to follow the changes Henri Barbusse's views underwent from his letters to Gorky.

His first letter to Gorky was written in 1921. In it we read the following: "I have known of your preface to the Russian edition of my book *Under Fire* for a long time. With due apology for the delay, allow me to tell you, how proud I was and still am of this honour, and how grateful I am to you."

In his following letters Barbusse informs Gorky of his work in the West-European anti-militarist group of writers, "Clarté," and of the measures he is taking to extend its activities and to enlist the co-operation of the broad masses of progressive-minded intelligentsia. His simple and reserved lines reflect the enormous energy, the clearness of purpose and the fighting spirit of the man whom progressive Frenchmen call "the Soldier of Peace." The image of peace permeates all of his letters.

At first Barbusse is careful to stress the fact that "Clarté" has no part in "direct and militant political strife," in "party problems" (February 17, 1921). Before long, however, Barbusse emerges as an experienced organizer, well-versed in the way of class-struggle. In his letter of October 30, 1928, he broaches the subject of convening an International Anti-Fascist Congress whose concern it would be to bring before public opinion "the exhaustive materials of indictment" against fascism—"against that barbarian and perfected offensive of world reaction." The "direct and militant political strife" which "Clarté" has formerly renounced now becomes its programme. Many of Barbusse's subsequent letters are also devoted to the Congress, to the practical sides of its organization. His last letter to Gorky is dated June 16, 1934; it is a call for a campaign against

survivre utilisée dans le goutteur pour servir de la mort, à défaut de sa propre vie. Celle de ses parents, de ses frères et de ses sœurs, qui sont le meilleur et le plus belles légat, tout comme lui. Mais l'importance de la forme : ils détestent l'usure du temps. Ils sont des esprits magiques, mais magiques de morts. Un mort que se grant que le temps ne puisse les rattraper. Un mort que soit échappé à la mort. La grande mort ambiante de l'humanité faites de mariage et d'amour. Mais une autre mort ambiante, celle de l'individu. Il est un mari unique. Il est un mari vivant. Il est un mari vivant. Il est un mari vivant. Il est un mari vivant.

Romain Rolland's letter to Maxim Gorky. November 24, 1923.

"those official German bandits" who contrived "the Thaelmann frame-up" and were now scheming to do away with him.

Extremely emotional, even passionate, are Stefan Zweig's letters to Gorky. In them the prominent Austrian writer reveals his innermost thoughts on the destiny of European culture and on his own fate and calling.

Zweig loved Gorky dearly. In his letter of August 29, 1923, he writes: "I love your works tremendously. For years nothing has moved me so deeply as the account of your first marriage in *Reminiscences*. We have no one in German literature with your ingenuous truthfulness. . . . To my mind, your ingenuousness has no equal in literature; even Tolstoy did not possess this artlessness of narration." Zweig admires Gorky's "divine simplicity" (March 9, 1925), his "keen insight and his gift of showing man such as he is. . . ." (March 10, 1927). "How indebted to you psychological truth is, and how we in Europe suffer for lack of lucidity—the soul of all your works!" Zweig exclaims. (December 19, 1926).

His contact with Gorky influenced Zweig's own creative work, it gave him food for thought about his style. Zweig's stories and his literary portrait of Rolland produced a profound impression on Gorky, as we gather from his first letter to him. Deeply moved, Zweig answered: "I am embarrassed by your kind remarks about my work. I feel that I am still far from possessing the simplicity that characterizes real tragedy; I reproach myself for an excess of psychology in my works and for the lack of that sublime ingenuousness which is so remarkable in you Russians. . . . We have to retrieve our way, have to become natural again, but you have the talent of being yourself, you cannot be otherwise. We have a surplus of "culture" to suppress in ourselves, and the profundity of our people remains concealed from us. I am perfectly aware of what I ought to be and hence I am never satisfied. (September 26, 1923).

In his letters Stefan Zweig gives voice to his hatred of that greatest of social evils—German nationalism. It was his ambition "to unite all those who place their trust in humanity and not in the ephemeral idols of nationalism and political struggle, all those who retain gratitude for the men and women, who, at a time when mankind was hard-hearted and drunk with blood and slaughter, still remained human beings." (March 9, 1925). In these letters, however, there is a feeling of loneliness and weariness, loss of historical perspective, a desire to limit the contents to refined psychologic analysis. "I have abandoned the hope that in this distressing age reason can be of any help." To this conclusion Zweig comes in his letter of November 3, 1923.

Literary scholars will find data in these letters which will prove helpful in appreciating Zweig's outlook and aesthetic views and which will throw light on the subsequent tragedy of his life.

In their letters to each other Zweig and Gorky mention Romain Rolland's name frequently and with great affection. Rolland and Gorky speak of Zweig with tender feeling. In 1923, when the author of *Jean-Christophe* was Zweig's guest in Salzburg, they discussed Gorky's works and spoke highly of them. A most interesting literary and biographic study could be written on the theme: Gorky-Rolland-Zweig.

29. Aug 1923



KAPUZINERBERG 5
SALZBURG

(Austria)

Sehr geehrter Herr Gorki,

Selten hat mir die Post so
gute Nachricht ins Haus gebracht, als die Nachricht,
Sie wollten meine Novelle „Der Brief einer Unbe-
kannten“ in Ihrer Sammlung bringen. Selbstver-
ständlich bin ich freudig einverstanden: aber das
Freudigste ist für mich Ihre Zustimmung. Ich
liebe Ihr Werk unendlich: seit Jahren hat mich
nichts dermaßen erschüttert, wie die Schilderung Ihrer
ersten Ehe in den „Erinnerungen“. Wir haben niemanden
der in der deutschen Literatur, der diese Künstlichkeit
der Wahrheit hätte — wir wissen, was kann sie auch
durch Kunst, vielleicht sogar durch Kunst erreichen. Aber
Ihre Künstlichkeit ist für mich einzig: selbst Tolstoi
hätte nicht diese Natürlichkeit des Erzählers. Wie lieb
ist Ihre Brücke! Wie edel ist Ihre unglaubliche Haltung
in all diesen verbrecherischen Jahren!

Mir ist nun einzig wohl,
dass ich Ihnen meine Liebe nur verdeckt sagen darf.
Und fassen Sie es nicht als aufdringlich auf, wenn
ich Ihnen zwei Bücher sende, einen kleinen Beitrag.

In 1915 Gorky asked Bernard Shaw to contribute to the "Ljetopis" (The Chronicle), an anti-war magazine. Subsequently, a correspondence began. On May 24, 1917, Shaw sent Gorky a long letter in which he expounded his views on topical problems. This witty letter contains statements which to our mind are subjective, paradoxical and obviously erroneous; but its general trend points to the progressive stand of the British playwright. Shaw speaks of the Russian Revolution as "a gain to humanity." The dethronement of "the Hohenzollerns and the Hapsburgs, who are the protagonists of autocracy in Europe" is the immediate target of world democracy, he declares. Shaw lays stress on the fact that "the defeat of the central empires is essential to the success of the common cause of democracy and socialism."

On the occasion of Gorky's sixtieth birthday in 1928, Bernard Shaw sends him a warm, friendly letter.

"My dear Gorky,

"Is it possible that you are only 60? It seems a century since we met in London¹; and you were then already a full-grown man.

"I have kept up our acquaintance by reading your books, and hope you look at mine occasionally.

"Europe did not notice my age until I was 70; and then it nearly killed me with congratulations: I had to run away to save my life. Why cannot they let us grow old in peace?

Faithfully,

G. Bernard Shaw."

The correspondence between Gorky and Herbert Wells also began during the First World War; but the first letter of Wells' to be registered in Gorky's private archives is dated 1920. This letter reflects the historico-philosophical conceptions of the British author. He sent a copy of his *The Outline of History* to his Russian friend with the following comments:

"It is an attempt to introduce a new spirit into the teaching of history in schools by substituting the *history of all mankind* for the history of the particular nation or race to which the learner belongs. I do not believe that any established peace is possible in this world until some such change of intellectual basis has been effected and after two years of toil I am producing the first sketch of what might be taught to intelligent young people in all countries. *History*, I believe, is *one* just as chemistry is one. This history which begins with the oldest rocks will conclude with a clear summary of the treaties of 1919 and 1920 and a discussion of the bleak yet hopeful dawn of world union and social justice in which we are living."

¹ Gorky and Shaw first met in London in May, 1907. Gorky was there as a delegate of the Fifth Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Party.

Wells' subsequent letters were devoted to the movement he was helping to organize to raise relief funds for Russian scientists who were suffering great hardships after the First World War and the Civil War in Russia. He furnishes the Petrograd Scientists' Club with special literature and provisions.

Wells' social views are best seen from his letter of December 21, 1920, which runs as follows:

"I have finished my little book on Russia. I have done all I can to make our people here realize that the Soviet government is a government of human beings and not a peculiar emanation from the Nether World, and I think I have done a good deal in one way and another to make civilized relations between the two sides of Europe more possible. I am having the book sent to you. You will see that I have not flattered the Bolsheviks. To have done so would have absolutely defeated the purpose of the book."

"The book when it was published in the form of newspaper articles produced such an effect that Churchill found it necessary to reply to which I made a counter reply. And slew him. I am sending you the issues of *Sunday Express* containing this controversy."

What Wells has in view is *Russia in the Shadows* which he wrote after his visit to the Soviet Union and which met with wide response. In it he gives a description of a harassed land, laid waste by war, and his voice rings out with burning power against the ruling classes of Britain and France who were responsible for the armed intervention against the Soviet Republic. Wells' essays are leveled at the fabrications of the Whiteguard emigrants and foreign reactionary press.

Victor Margueritte's letters are devoted mainly to Gorky's novel, *Mother*. International Social Publications suggested that he write the preface to the French version of the novel (published in Paris in 1935). In this connection Victor Margueritte writes to Gorky as follows: "I want to tell you of the great joy I felt when 'International Social Publications' have asked me to acquaint the French public with your immortal masterpiece *Mother*. . . . Potentially this book embraces the entire October Revolution." Margueritte takes pride in writing the preface to these "inspiring pages which are a credit to world literature."

There is only one letter of Bertolt Brecht's in the Archives. Whether this was the only letter Gorky received from that remarkable German dramatist is unknown. From New York Brecht informs Gorky that he has dramatized *Mother* and that it was staged in the autumn of 1935 by the Union Theatre (New York). He goes on to say that the play has aroused considerable controversy. "The immortal Pelageya Vlasova, however, was above all controversy. The novel has compelled the respect of even the bourgeois press who spoke of it as a classical work of art."

Knut Hamsun began corresponding with Gorky in 1909. In his first letter he confined himself to business matters (to his dealings with the publishing house Znanie of which Gorky was the head). But even so, it is of interest to his biographers, for in it he gives an account of the hard life he is leading and confesses that he has practically no readers in his own country. His subsequent letters are more

confidential. When he was ill he would ask his wife Marie Hamsun to do his letter-writing for him. On January 26th, 1923, she writes: "We have most of your books here and we often speak about you. There is not a single book that my husband loves as much as he does your great *Childhood*." On April 18th, 1927, Marie Hamsun writes: "My husband being still ill. . . asks me to thank you most heartily for the letter and tell you that of all the Russian authors he admires you most. You and Dostoyevsky."

Gorky's correspondence with foreign writers did much to promote their interest in Russian culture and in the Russian people—a people of whom Herbert Wells in one of his letters wrote with such fervour and frankness: "We don't understand, we are perplexed, but there is a great faith here that at bottom the Russians are a profound and great and gifted people playing and destined to play a leading part in the creation of a new world." (February 11, 1920).

4

In Gorky's own letters we cannot help admiring the tactful and intelligent approach to the diverse individuals. His exhaustive and versatile knowledge, his ability to share the interests of his correspondents is remarkable. Many of his letters contain profound thoughts on problems of aesthetics and valuable advice on the art of writing.

They reveal him as a propagator of Russian culture, a popularizer of the achievements of the Soviet Union, an indefatigable champion of peace. He was a wise and tactful counselor and a brilliant artist, capable of understanding and sympathizing with the creative and ideological quests of his correspondents.

Singleness of purpose was characteristic of Gorky. All his life he stood in the vanguard of the cultural forces—within Russia at first, and on the international scene later on.

The idea of cultural collaboration among nations and of a united front of cultural workers against obscurantism in any form define the general trend of Gorky's letters.

Even his first letters abroad reflect this tendency of Gorky's to establish closer links between the progressive forces of the world, to join together the "masters of culture" under humane and internationalist slogans. Outstanding in this connection is Gorky's letter of February 27, 1905, to the *Berliner Tageblatt*.

As a "soldier" in the Revolution of 1905, Gorky offers thanks to all those who sympathized with the Russian people in their struggle for emancipation, in their attempt to storm the stronghold of tsarism. In this remarkable document Gorky expresses a firm belief in the progress of humanity. The time will inevitably come, he says, when people the world over will "acknowledge the spiritual kinship between themselves and hold their fellow-men in higher esteem for, notwithstanding his shortcomings, man is the most sublime creature on earth and can never be enthralled, never!"

Somewhat later, in 1907, in a long letter to the British cultural worker Charles Wright, Gorky tells of the persecutions the participants and supporters of the

вободительного движениі - человѣкъ, у котораго находятъ запрещенную брошюру, ссылается въ Сибирь.

И наконецъ - убийство Герценштейна, насилие надъ профессоромъ Милковымъ. Скорѣ Бы увидите ясно, что оба эти факта и рядъ другихъ совершины при участіи лицъ стоящихъ близко къ трону.

Вы скажете - но вѣдь и другая сторона убиваетъ.

Естественно. Террористические акты революціонныхъ группъ акты самозащиты или - мести, вполнѣ законной, согласитесь. Нападаетъ сильный на слабаго, правительство убиваетъ сотни и тысячи, оно убиваетъ каждый день несолько человѣкъ, террористы - уничтожаютъ людей подобныхъ Игнатьеву или Плеве, или Мину, т. е. людей, которые у Васъ въ Англіи были бы сосланы на каторгу, т. е. уничтожены обществомъ и закономъ.

Я увѣренъ, что если-бы Вашъ народъ умиралъ съ голода - какъ умираютъ теперь русскіе мужики - если-бы Ваши министры запрещали его кормить - какъ это дѣлаютъ наши русскіе министры - англійское общество потребовало-бы суда надъ такими людьми и - осудило бы ихъ.

Я пишу все это зная уваженіе англо-саксовъ къ закону, зная, что Высъ, англичанъ, отталкиваетъ къ русской революціи терроръ. Но - будьте справедливы. Вы должны понять, что творцомъ анархіи въ странѣ является правительство во главѣ со царемъ, поощрившимъ убійца наградами, творцомъ террора является правительство. Оно бѣть, ему отвѣчайтъ.

Я слышалаѣмъ пѣни человѣка для того, чтобы оправдывать убийства, но, убажая человѣка, я должна изнанть за него право самовинити, не такъ ли?

Люди, которыхъ хотятъ избѣгать ладони посредствомъ ужаса - это не люди, они все, чѣмъ бы хотите, но - не люди.

Въ то-же время я знаю русский народъ - это крѣпкий, терпѣливый, трудоспособный народъ и онъ вполнѣ готовъ къ работѣ по восстановленію жизни отъ сны, отъ разбѣженной и разгромленной безуміемъ пропасти сферы, безуміемъ, которое вызвано у нихъ страшное потерять власть надъ страной.

Чтвѣтнѣе за засѣченое письмо. Рѣчь -
члену Рѣвю руки. Долженъ ради боязни
всемъ показать ее членамъ и въ дальнѣйшемъ
Рѣвику и другимъ членамъ. Извѣстите
когда-нибудь! Всего доброго!

Кишинѣ
16? января
1906?

М. Герценштейнъ

Maxim Gorky's letter to Charles Wright. (Gorky made an error dating the letter 1906.
It was actually written in January 1907—Ed.)

liberation movement were suffering on the part of the tsarist government; he shows the "mental depravity of the ruling classes, the pathologic state of these creatures who strive to retain their hold on their advantage-ground at all costs." It was an inspired and sharp letter, a document to open the eyes of the English intelligentsia on what was going on in Russia and to help them gain a deeper understanding of the high moral qualities of the Russian people, of its craving for life on just and reasonable principles.

Gorky's letters reveal his innermost thoughts on Man and his calling on earth. For example, in his letter to Herbert Wells of March 18-21, 1917, he writes:

"To arouse in youth a sense of social romanticism, to impart to it love of life and confidence in people, to teach it heroism—such is our aim. Man must be made to understand that he is the creator and lord of the world and bears the responsibility for miseries as well as for joys on earth.

"That Man may break the chains of nationalism and individualism which enslave him, he must be taught the meaning of all-embracing unity."

Gorky's humanistic and organizational activities are graphically reflected in his letters of the early twenties. At that time Gorky was planning publication of a new literary-scientific magazine which was to give the Soviet readers an idea of the latest achievements in European art and science. He asked Herbert Wells, Upton Sinclair, Romain Rolland, Bernard Shaw, Franz Hellens, and other prominent figures to contribute. Many of them responded, and their works were printed in the *Beseda*, (Talk), a Russian-language magazine published in Berlin from 1923 till 1925. The letters Gorky wrote in this connection contain most interesting opinions on European culture, on the tasks confronting the progressive intelligentsia and on the creative works of those authors whose services he had enlisted or had wanted to enlist.

Gorky set himself the task of keeping cultural workers abroad properly informed on events in Russia. In his letters, and especially in those to Romain Rolland, he gives vivid depictions of life in the Soviet Union, of Soviet culture and of achievements in socialist construction. He is enthusiastic in his descriptions of the rapid cultural growth of the wide masses in the Soviet Union and the miraculous transformation the country is undergoing. The enormous creative energy of the people "who has finally discovered its ego, its place in life and the joy of free creative work in all spheres," fills him with wonder and delight (1928). In his letter to Rolland of January 30, 1930, he writes: "Last summer I visited Murmansk, the Arctic Ocean, the Volga, the Black Sea, and the Caucasus. This summer I plan to go to the Urals, Siberia, and the Far East. I want to see these places without fail. Life is tremendously interesting. What a joy it is to have lived to see this tragic, complicated and free age!"

The optimism of Soviet reality, "the joy of life," as he puts it in one of his letters to Rolland, rings in each line. Thus, in 1932, writing about the cultural achievements of the Soviet Union, Gorky exclaims: "My dear friend, how passionately, how sincerely I wish you could experience the happiness and pride I feel on this joyful day as I converse with you to the rustle of pine- and birch-trees

and to the cries of children who are destined to grow up into healthy, strong, clever and happy citizens." In another letter that year he writes: "I have so much interesting work to do, my dear friend. How I wish I could see you in Moscow, whether it be in a box at the Bolshoi or Art Theatre, on the deck of a Volga steamer, or on the border of a Russian forest. . . ."

Gorky began popularizing Soviet literature abroad as far back as the Civil War. Once he sent one of Fedin's stories to Franz Hellens, to be published in Belgium. Hellens' comments on the young Soviet author's work were highly complimentary, which afforded Gorky the greatest satisfaction which he expressed in his return letter. In the years to follow he constantly pointed out in his letters the achievements of Soviet literature.

A study of Gorky's letters reveals that with the passage of time his ideas on peace, on the struggle against the instigators of war, on the meaning of genuine and militant humanism, become ever more pronounced. Not only "joy of life" does he proclaim now—he calls upon people to be vigilant, to be active. He keeps a watchful eye on the fascist movement. In one of his letters to Rolland (1932) he points out that the fate of fascism is sealed; in another he expresses his admiration for Georgi Dimitrov—that outstanding fighter against fascism. Gorky keeps his French friend informed on the preparations under way for the Anti-War Congress. Inspired by the struggle for peace and passionate in their demand to safeguard the spiritual values of mankind, to defend Reason and Beauty from the encroachments of reaction, many of Gorky's letters are in keeping with his celebrated article *On Which Side Are You, Masters of Culture?* and with his militant writings in the Soviet period.

The outstanding features of Gorky's letters are their passionate vigour, their optimism, their confidence in the inevitable triumph of Reason and Justice. Unusually interesting in this connection are the following lines from his letter to Wells (May, 1922):

"My dear friend,

"On such people as you, history imposes the painful duty of being Don Quixotes, but instead of windmills and flocks of sheep, it places before you actual monsters of spite, stupidity, and greed. I devoutly believe in our victory over these monsters. I know that you also nourish this belief in your heart.

"So let us go on fighting!"

Not only do these letters enrich our general knowledge of Gorky and his correspondents, not only do they reveal their outlook; they bear witness to the great importance progressive writers of all countries attach to cultural contacts.

Commenting on Gorky's activities Rolland said that Gorky was called upon to promote cultural ties between Russia and the West. There can be no better confirmation of this statement than Gorky's letters.

Ekaterina STARIKOVA

LEONID LEONOV

A WRITER of versatile talent—novelist, playwright, publicist—Leonid Leonov is one of the most gifted creative artists in Russian literature today. It is as a novelist, however, that he is best known and that his talent finds its fullest expression. Since the appearance of his first book, *The Badgers*, in 1924, Leonov has written six long novels, each of which has been a noteworthy contribution to Soviet literature.

Back in the early days of his literary career Leonov made a statement of far-reaching significance. "Our strength," he said, "as well as our experience, is derived from the Revolution. As far as literature is concerned, we young writers were born after 1917."

While this may be said of any of the founders of Soviet literature—Leonov's contemporaries—the inner growth and experience of each was highly individual and unique. To understand Leonov's development as an artist it is necessary to know something about life in old Russia, for some of the most vivid and distinctive features of his talent have their roots there.

An essential feature of Leonov's talent is a sharp sense of historical ties. He sees the shoots of a new life pushing through the soil, sweeping away the old and the obsolete but preserving the finest traits of the national character. That is why he is so fond of excursions into the past. The purpose of those excursions is to explain his hatred of the black heritage of the past, of the grasping instincts, the ignorance and narrow-minded prejudice of the old life, and also to instil in the reader love for the heroic traditions of Russia, for the noble qualities of the Russian national character, for certain customs of the people. And it is because of this sharp sense of history that Leonov responds so keenly to the new and the unprecedented in present-day life. It is no accident, therefore, that he was among the first Soviet writers to bring up in his works topical problems of major significance.

The novelist's father, Maxim Leonidovich Leonov, was a self-taught poet and a publisher of literature for the people. Persecuted by the tsarist government, frequently arrested and exiled, he spent little time with his family. The

majority of his son's memories about him are associated with arrests, returns from exile and with pictures of Schiller, Heine, Shakespeare, and Dostoyevsky in his study.

The boy was brought up by his grandfather, keeper of a small grocery shop in Zaryadye, the old shopkeepers' quarter of Moscow located not far from the Kremlin. The old man was religious. The boy would read the Lives of the Saints to him and he would weep.

The set, middle-class way of life and the pious atmosphere of the house tinged all Leonov's early impressions and left an indelible imprint on his mind. Undying hatred for grasping, petty-minded instincts that way of life engendered was the bridge by which he crossed to the Revolution, to the new way of life.

Leonov was in his last year at secondary school when the Revolution came. In 1918 he was already in the Red Army, working on a frontline newspaper in the South of Russia. He remained in the army for three years, until 1921, when he came to live in Moscow.

In Moscow Leonov worked in a small machine shop by day—he lived in a room adjoining the shop. His evenings he spent at the editorial office of *Krasny Voin* ("Red Soldier") where he edited the verse feuilleton department. By night he wrote, using a sheet of plywood on a stool for a desk. From his pen came one story after another. Recognition came to him quickly.

Leonov's writing in those early years was strongly influenced by Dostoyevsky. Scholars of his work have found this influence a most interesting problem. Leonov himself takes ironic pleasure in relating how he was rejected by the philological department of the University because the examining professor thought he did not know Dostoyevsky well enough. The professor was mistaken—one of Leonov's first stories—*The End of a Little Man* (1922)—is markedly influenced by Dostoyevsky.

While Leonov's first efforts were not particularly original—they were mostly stylized tales on Biblical subjects, legends tinged with Oriental romanticism or complete fantasies, eclectic and strongly imitative of decadent prose—there was something about them that evoked widespread interest in the young author. This interest was due primarily to his extraordinary skill with words. True, he was lavish, too lavish, with striking comparisons and unusual epithets. He used too many complex metaphors, but though his sense of proportion often failed him, in his very lavishness there was outstanding talent.

Why was the young writer, after the powerful impressions of the Revolution and the Civil War, so deeply drawn to the fantastic? The answer can be found in Leonov's own words. The fairy-tale, he says, enables one to condense profound philosophical meaning into a small space without having to describe everyday details. "I do not like to introduce descriptions of manners into my books without a special purpose," he adds.

This is today's Leonov, author of major philosophical novels, speaking. And, to be sure, Leonov's symbolic plots and fantastic tales of the early twenties contain the embryo, as it were, of his future novels, the keynote of which is a striving to give a philosophical interpretation of the epoch.

Leonov has met with genuine success as an author of long realistic novels in which lofty ideas arise from the portrayal of contemporary life.

Leonov's first novel, *The Badgers*, dealt with the most burning problem of the times—the relations between the peasantry and the young Soviet power. With poignancy the author depicted the tragedy of that section of the peasantry which, not understanding their true interests and unable to foresee the future, allowed the kulaks to incite them to rebellion against the Revolution. It tells the story of two brothers, who became mortal enemies—Semyon, the younger, leader of the rebels, and Pavel, a Bolshevik commissar. In the end Semyon is compelled to submit to Pavel's confident strength.

This novel contains many of the author's boyhood impressions. His father and grandfather are easily recognizable among its characters. The old way of life is portrayed with a wealth of detail. The purpose of these graphic excursions into the past is to show the roots of grasping, self-seeking instincts and psychology.

The Badgers attracted Gorky's attention. He wrote the young author a flattering letter, and from that time on the two men maintained regular contact with each other. Gorky followed Leonov's literary development attentively and gave him frequent advice and encouragement.

A keen interest in confused, vacillating individuals who suffer mental torment because of their contradictory position in the Revolution is a characteristic feature of Leonov's writings in the twenties. Despite the obvious justice of Pavel's cause and his clear victory, it is to the tragic figure of Semyon that the author gives most of his attention. It is this concern with the inner conflicts of the individual that Leonov has in common with Dostoyevsky. And the more the split personality problem is crystallized and set apart from the mainstream of life, the more marked is Dostoyevsky's influence on Leonov's work.

This is evident in *The Thief*, a novel portraying an ex-Civil War hero's painful break with the Revolution because of his feeling that the Revolution, now that it is on the path of peaceful development, is betraying its ideals. In protest the hero descends to the dregs of humanity, becoming king of a gang of thieves. The novel is not so much concerned with the hero's underworld adventures as with his mental torment, his struggle between penitence and doubt.

There is nothing in common, it would seem, between the above novel, with its intricate, twisted composition, its bizarre setting (the world of thieves, murderers, tramps) and Leonov's next novel *Sote*—an inspired paean to the great work of construction—describing the fight for socialism in the late twenties and early thirties.

All over the country construction work was in progress. Peasant Russia, built of wood, was turning into an industrial power of iron and steel. Gigantic changes were taking place not only in the national economy but also in the geography of the land, not only in the way of life of millions but also in their psychology. Naturally, Leonov could not remain a bystander, and in 1929 he wrote a novel dealing with the construction of a cellulose paper mill in the heart of a virgin forest.



Leonid Leonov

"A monument to the present day," Gorky called that novel, prophesying a great future for it. And indeed, *Sote* went down in the history of Soviet literature as one of the first and most significant examples of the trend that became known in literary criticism by the colourless term "production novel." But the best of these so-called production novels, it should be remembered, were written with fervour and imbued with bright romanticism.

What is the explanation of the artistic, or rather the psychological, change that caused the author of a book like *The Thief* to write *Sote*, an optimistic novel with clear-cut composition and well-defined characters?

In the epilogue to *The Thief* Leonov mentions in passing that his hero abandoned his dangerous trade and went to work in a timber camp, thereby embarking on a new life of constructive labour. It has been said that epilogues are to novels what "life after death" is to the living. But although the epilogue did not alter the substance of the novel, it was the embryo, as it were, of the author's

next book. Leonov followed his hero into the forest, to the plain working people. . . . And in place of the confused and penitent hero we have an entirely different type, a new hero of strong convictions and iron will.

Construction chief Uvadyev, the hero of *Sote*, is a practical man and a Communist. The picture of him contains a certain amount of romantic idealization, emphasizing the ascetism and austerity attributed to Bolsheviks by a large part of the literature of the twenties. But Leonov portrays the world through Uvadyev's eyes and that, of course, accounts for the change in his style.

Sote was the first book to give expression to the broad view of present-day developments which subsequently became an inalienable feature of Leonov's work. There is a sense of historical perspective in the writing. While Leonov is very exact in describing technical processes, giving a detailed and faithful picture of the construction site, with its everyday troubles and its small victories, he readily shifts to a higher emotional plane, and then the reader begins to see far more than an ordinary paper mill under construction. He sees the vastness of the new surging forward throughout the land, he sees this onward march being hampered by the stagnancy, inertia and hidebound prejudice of old Russia, by nature's untamed forces, by the malice of embittered members of the defeated and departing classes. The novel is built on contrasts in imagery and colour. The language is varied and rich in metaphors. A lyric note, expressing the author's own feelings, is strong throughout the book.

In those days Soviet writers showed much interest in out-of-the-way regions of Russia which the Revolution had drawn into the orbit of modern civilization. Leonov was one of a group of writers who toured Central Asia. As the result of that trip he wrote several stories which, though based on the same experiences, were widely dissimilar in style and subject-matter. *The Locust*, dealing with a very practical subject—the fight against locusts—was written with deep psychological insight. It exposed the false romanticism of the exotic and glorified ordinary, useful labour.

Leonov's next important novel, *Skutarevsky*, which appeared in 1933, told the story of how an old scientist came over to the side of the Revolution. The psychological conflict of the novel is based on the contrast between the native democratism of the gifted man, his highly original personality that is naturally drawn to the new, and the petty narrow-mindedness of those who set themselves against the people. This was a conflict suggested by real life.

Incidentally, special note should be taken of the story line connected with the youngest characters in the novel. With close attention and with a certain amount of surprise Leonov begins to observe the generation that grew up after the Revolution and did not experience the inner struggle that their elders did. He finds these young people rather naive and primitive and is a bit distrustful of the optimistic simplicity of their outlook. But he is attracted, and ever more strongly, by the nobility of the aims and the vital energy of these people of the new world, and it is not by chance that he so often embodies his ideas of the new generation in the image of a young girl—the personification of poetry, light and youth.

The evolution of this image can easily be traced through Leonov's work, beginning with *Skutarevsky* and ending with his latest play *The Golden Carriage*.

While Leonov began to write plays back in the twenties, he attained fullest development as a dramatist in the thirties, when *Wolf*, *The Blizzard*, *The Gardens of Poltavchansk* won wide acclaim and became regular features of the repertoires of two of the country's leading drama theatres, the Maly Theatre and the Moscow Art Theatre.

The above plays are psychological dramas dealing with sharply defined political issues. Rising, as it were, above the commonplace, they are charged with a feeling of restlessness and a foreboding of social disaster on a world scale. This quality, no doubt, reflected the times, for the plays were written immediately before the war.

Leonov's first wartime production was a play entitled *Invasion* (1942) which achieved wide popularity and had a long run on the stage and also as a film. The conflict is based on the fight not only against the nazi invaders but also against traitors who hoped to regain the privileges of which they had been deprived by the Revolution. The plot includes an important psychological theme —the portrayal of a man's reformation and restoration of inner balance and human dignity through his joining the people.

Leonov has been reproached for his preoccupation with the dark recesses of the human soul. A number of critics have been inclined to regard this feature of his talent as a flaw in his work. Such critics, however, lose sight of the lofty ideals that this manner of portrayal serves. To make my meaning clearer I should like to quote Leonov himself. The following words refer to Chekhov.

"While he loved his country," Leonov once remarked, "he never flattered it, as a stranger or a hypocrite might." Leonov never flatters his heroes, or his readers either. He conscientiously analyses both the noble and the lowly impulses of human nature, believing that "only a perfect man is capable of winning perfect happiness, and therefore it is every man's duty to have a perfect biography, one that he is not ashamed to tell aloud, in the presence of children, on a sunny noon in the most peopled squares in the world."

These lofty ideals and high moral standard are a direct and valuable heritage from Russian classical literature and Leonov cherishes that heritage and enriches it.

During the war years Leonov was a regular contributor to newspapers and magazines; the articles he wrote then comprise an entire volume. His remarkable skill as a stylist gave his articles extraordinary impact. His themes were the themes of all Soviet writers in those years—love of country, hatred of fascism, the heroic national traditions, the heroic exploits of the people. His articles were outstanding for the power and imagery with which they expressed the feelings of the people.

A time of tribulation for the whole country, the war was also a period of intensified experience in all fields of activity. This applies to writing too. The talent and abilities of many writers matured considerably during the war.

Leonov began a search for a comprehensive prose form capable of giving expression to the vast materials the war provided, or, to be more exact, to the thoughts and feelings the war aroused. Evidence of this search can be seen in *The Chariot of Wrath* (1943), the story of a tank crew's heroism in the battle of Kursk. The book is weakened by excessively emotional language but the author's reflections on the heroism of the young citizens of his country, on the old and new national traits of the Russian people, make this story a prelude to his next long novel, *Russian Forest*.¹

It was ten years after the publication of *The Chariot of Wrath* before Leonov completed this, the longest of all his novels.

In *Russian Forest* Leonov deals not only with major aesthetic and philosophical problems but also with economic problems of national significance. His hero, Professor Vikhrov, an unassuming forestry expert, dedicates his life to the effort to achieve the conservation and thrifty utilization of the country's timber resources. In the course of scientific discussions he comes into conflict with the ambitious and self-seeking Professor Gratsiansky. Leonov's characterization of Gratsiansky is a broad and convincing picture of an unfeeling egoist who takes all he can from life, giving nothing in return. The two men's argument about the forest becomes a question of true and false patriotism, of an attitude to life, of duty and conscience.

"He who has not shared the people's sorrow to the full is sure to feel an outsider at their feast of joy," says one of the characters, who is later put to death by the nazis. And, in the same key, Vikhrov says: "We are entering a grim and possibly a long period, when the success of the noblest of causes will depend on the discipline in the relations of contemporaries and of generations." "But what do people aspire to?" his young daughter Polya asks. "To happiness, they say, but I think that's wrong. Purity is what one should aspire to. Happiness is purity's chief reward and its accessory."

How does Leonov understand this purity, which gives a man the right to happiness, "the right to look your people straight in the eye?" Is it ascetism in private life, modesty in material requirements, traits that are common to Leonov's heroes? Or is it a sense of duty to the family, or the conscientious performance of one's job?

A man's worth is measured by a much higher standard in *Russian Forest*. It is a standard based on the grandeur of the people's historical destinies. "Patiently explain to the children," Vikhrov says to his students, ". . . that the power of patriotism is always directly proportional to the quantity of personal labour put into it. . . ." These words are the key to the novel, they are the credo of the author and his favourite characters.

Leonov is a skilled master of literary composition. When talking about his novels he usually draws a diagram of the plan of each of them. The composition of *Russian Forest* is especially interesting and intricate. In it the past and the present are interwoven so organically that they emerge as a single theme.

¹ The first part of *Russian Forest* was published in our magazine No 6, 1954.

And, as ever, it is not merely the milieu that interests the author in his excursions into the past, but the roots of the present-day conflicts and present-day actions of the Russian people.

Tenderness and radiance pervade Leonov's portrayals of the younger generation on whose shoulders so heavy a burden of death, blood and single combat with the enemy has fallen. There is genuine poetry in his portrait of Polya, Vikhrov's young daughter who commits a heroic deed in the enemy rear.

As the principal theme unfolds, the Russian forest is seen as a many-sided generalized symbol, embodying the author's conception of Russia, of the grandeur of the Russian people. The people as a whole is represented by turns as a wise and generous hero, champion of truth and justice, as a blind beggar, as a secret sanctuary, housing the national spirit, as the essence of the beauty of the Russian landscape. Leonov's symbol is a realistic one, for it derives from objective present-day and historical reality. It is not opposed to reality but heightens our picture of reality, lending it greater depth and expressiveness. A symbolic image of this type provides an original form for a philosophical novel in which the past, present and future, economics and ethics, publicistic writing and lyrics intermingle.

The metaphoric language of the novel is closely akin to poetry. The author's imagery is intended as a stimulus, evoking definite associations in the reader's mind.

Seventeen-year-old Polya sees Moscow for the first time from the top of an eight-storey building. "On the golden domes, slightly flattened, as if by the weight of the sky, something gleamed—probably the dew of history, not yet completely dry." This striking image takes the place of a long passage describing the vague thoughts about her country's glory and greatness that flashed through the girl's mind.

The writer uses this method frequently: the abstract and the complex are conveyed through the tangible and the concrete, and, vice versa, the simple and the ordinary are lifted to a poetic plane and personified.

The books in Vikhrov's library, for instance, are described as "toilers, with torn bindings and strips of paper covered with writing sticking out of them. You can mark up their margins, stuff them into knapsacks before leaving for a field trip, use them for barricade fighting." This last sudden departure from the commonplace attributes of the metaphor hints to the reader, who is not yet acquainted with the hero, that Vikhrov is a revolutionary at his job.

Many are the threads that lead to *Russian Forest* from Leonov's former books—favourite problems and themes, certain techniques and even types of characters. In *Russian Forest*, however, they are illuminated by a far stronger light, a light that testifies to the new heights of creative art Leonov has attained.

W RITERS *and* ARTISTS FORUM

Vladimir LIDIN

PEOPLE I HAVE MET

STEFAN ZWEIG

ZWEIG's invitation came by telegram. It was a rainy, typically seaport morning when I arrived in Hamburg. White swans were floating on the rain-bubbled water of the Binnen Alster. Zweig lived in a little street tucked away near the Holstenwall-Ring. He lived all alone in the big city of Hamburg. He liked to write his books in strange, unfamiliar cities. Too many people knew him in Vienna and Salzburg. Here, in a furnished flat let to him for a month by a widow, he was quite unknown.

In Hamburg, Zweig was writing *Marie Antoinette*, one of several psychological portraits of complex historical figures. With the perception of a master he observed the psychological contradictions in various characters and brought to life figures that were centuries removed from us: Marie Antoinette or Erasmus of Rotterdam, the refined and sophisticated Marceline Desbordes-Valmore, or Magellan, the indefatigable explorer. It was as if he had his great companions living in the same room with him, he knew their lives in such detail. Like a doctor, he diagnosed their ailments and mental weaknesses. One of his books, on Hölderlin, Kleist and Nietzsche, is fittingly entitled *The Combating of Madness*.

Zweig was at home in this world of psychological observation, it was his life. He used to collect autographs, the manuscripts of outstanding or famous people; his collection included one of Beethoven's scores. He needed people's handwriting, their corrections and searches for words, for in these he might find the key to their personalities.

During the day Zweig worked behind thick curtains that shut out the day; lying in bed, by the light of a table lamp. He wrote his books in pencil. He received his guest in pyjamas and slippers. His pencil-written manuscript with an unfinished line was left lying on the pillow. None of the journalists who pestered

Zweig knew that he was in Hamburg. He liked this unobtrusive life, in an out-of-the-way flat, surrounded by the unpretentious middle-class domesticity of a widow who was a complete stranger to him. After the spaciousness of a rainy Hamburg I found myself in the stillness of this small dark flat. Zweig began to dress. Half an hour later he was clean-shaven, his hair varnish-smooth, his black moustache neatly trimmed. He looked like a doctor, or perhaps a businessman, but least of all like a writer. Only his wise dark eyes had a depth and a lyrical warmth in them that immediately suggested an artistic nature.

Zweig was glad to be interrupted in his work. We had met each other in Moscow in 1928 when he visited Russia for the Tolstoy celebrations. At Yasnaya Polyana this man, well-accustomed to European life and comfort, stood for a long time in the low, vaulted room where Tolstoy wrote *War and Peace*.

"This is a room where only a genius could work," he said, thinking of the new character of Tolstoy that had shown itself to him in the actual setting of Tolstoy's way of life.

It seemed as though some amendments to *The Three Singers of Their Life* had occurred to him during his visit to this estate, the home of one of his closest companions in life.

We left Zweig's flat and walked through the streets of Hamburg under an umbrella. Big towns, specially seaport towns are wonderful on rainy days; there was a breath of the North Sea in the rough weather. I asked Zweig why he, so discerning and subtle as a novelist, had of recent years retired into the world of biography. Zweig was slow in answering.

"The history of the lives of outstanding people is a history composed of spiritual complexities. . . at any rate, the history of France in the 19th century without an unravelling of such personalities as Fouché and Thiers would be incomplete. I am interested in the paths travelled by people who created works of genius, people like Stendhal or Tolstoy, or who astonished the world by their crimes, like Fouché. But I shall write a novel. . . . Yes, of course, I shall write a novel."

And Zweig told me about the novel he had in mind. It was to be a novel about the life of a girl after the First World War. The war had deeply shaken and left an indelible mark on Zweig's easily wounded personality. He had a story about a man who ran away from the war to neutral Switzerland, but even there the war overtook him; one can almost feel the horror that Zweig himself experienced in writing it. Zweig was a generous person in the broadest sense of the word. He performed a host of good deeds, always trying to remain anonymous. He helped dozens of people by sending them money, and never let it be known who had sent it. Human greed or cruelty never failed to rouse his indignation.

We walked down the broad streets of Hamburg in the rain. Forgetting about himself, Zweig carefully held the umbrella over me. He took me to dine in a very old and very expensive restaurant.

"I like," he said when we were sitting in the old-fashioned room with its portraits of Bismarck and Moltke, and lighted by gas brackets that looked almost as if they had been there since the end of the last century, "to sit side by side."



Vladimir Lidin, author of the novels *Ships at Sea*, *The Grave of an Unknown Soldier*, *Great or Pacific*, *The Son*, and *Two Lives*, is one of our oldest Soviet writers. His short novel *Distant Friend* was published in the August issue of this journal in 1956.

Besides his novels and stories Lidin is a writer of articles and *ocherks*. His reminiscences of Soviet and foreign writers have been brought together in a book called *People I Have Met*.

In his introduction to this book Lidin writes: "This is my tribute to various people, some of whom I saw in action and knew, others who were my friends, and yet others who were my companions in life. People of various calibre and various character, all dear to the author in that they each in their own way left a deep mark in his soul."

Here are some of reminiscences from the book.

with the wealthy, who assume from the fact of my presence that I too am wealthy, though I don't care a damn for wealth. It's a pleasant feeling to surprise them by ordering the most expensive dishes on the menu, which they have never tried in their lives because they are too mean."

And with quiet satisfaction Zweig ordered a very special *soupe à la tortue* and when the meal was over asked for a special kind of coffee, for the preparation of which a whole distillery of retorts and tubes had to be brought in on a trolley. It amused him tremendously to watch the coffee drip slowly from one of the tubes into his cup, and to feel the rich Hanse people casting glances of disapproval at him for his extravagance.

He was shy, hard on himself, and modest. His books were translated into nearly all languages and he had a competence; but that competence served him only as a source of whatever good deeds he could do, and to enable him to live independently, without making concessions in his moral principles to anyone.

"The biggest impression, the one that will remain with me all my life was my visit to the Soviet Union," he said, sipping the jet-black coffee that had at length dripped into his cup. "I knew the Russians from their superb literature, but now I have seen with my own eyes what kind of people the Russians are. . . . What a people!" he repeated thoughtfully. "That is why, when such great events are working themselves out in history, one doesn't want to invent in art." He returned to the subject of his novel. "And yet that girl was an invention."

Zweig wrote frequently and with perception about women, for he was well versed in the feelings of a woman's heart. He usually lived in Salzburg not far from Vienna. Not so very long ago, in the days when my generation were children, the names of Schnitzler, Hermann Bahr, Peter Altenberg, and Hofmannsthal were all the rage in Vienna, one of the most romantic cities in the world. Many were the lyrical themes that originated from the old Prater. Vienna did not change in her attachment to Strauss. Zweig used to travel to Vienna

from Salzburg. And it was here that he found his heroines; the subjects of his books *A Confusion of Feeling*, *The Invisible Collection* or *The Burning Secret* were Zweig's tribute to Vienna. This rather sensuous, intimate world was close to Zweig. He tried to penetrate deep into the complex arrangement of human relations.

Zweig was terribly afraid of old age; at that time he was on the verge of fifty.

"I am afraid of old age, the fading of one's strength, disability," he said, with an almost visible fear. "I can't bear to think of the day when I shall begin to get flabby."

He wanted to prolong this unusual meal with its chemical distillation of coffee. He had to finish the day in some waterfront café with a lot of different people, whose idiosyncracies he would be sure to want to find out and explain to himself. It was already evening, ships were hooting on the Elbe, and the wind was driving more rain from the North Sea.

"There are quite a lot of unfortunate creatures in these waterfront cafés and pubs... many of them are novels in themselves. A writer must know and see everything."

Zweig found his way confidently to one of his favourite cafés in the port area near the Elbe. The café was not crowded; there were only a few girls looking for a partner for the night.

"Look at that girl," said Zweig, ordering a cup of coffee. "I am sure it was only great misfortune that brought her here."

He was a little old-fashioned in his quest for an unhappy soul, but after all it was he who had compared Dostoyevsky to the great spirits of Balzac and Dickens. Half an hour later he was already conversing with the girl, an hour later he knew her whole life story and, ordinary though that story was, he discovered in it unusual features, which he at once embellished with his artistic imagination. And at the same time it was astonishing to observe the girl's trust in Zweig, who was quite a stranger to her, as she told him about her life. He won people's hearts by the warm and deep sincerity that glowed within him.

"It seems to me that no one before him wrote about love so feelingly, with such wonderful charity towards people, and, I repeat, with such deep respect for woman, a respect which they have for a long time lacked, and which they in every way deserve..." wrote Maxim Gorky about Zweig.

Zweig was a contemplative artist. In his broad generalization around an historical personality he tried to express the age in which that personality acted, and his biographical works thus become far more than a mere description of character. They are documents of the age, and Zweig's craftsmanship lends a vital truth to the insight of psychologist and artist. "Stefan Zweig is a rare and happy combination of the talent of a profound thinker with that of a first-class artist," was another thing Maxim Gorky said of him. "We ought to realize that we are only laying the path for new poetic forces that create and transform the world," Stefan Zweig said modestly of himself.

Zweig was in love with life that is made beautiful by feeling. He wanted to see the world heading towards the noble aim of perfecting the human personality. Very many people in all parts of the world who knew Zweig were captivated by the unsullied nobility of his nature.

"I shan't live to see it," he said bitterly at a late hour when the café was closing. "But I envy the man who will one day write the biography of Lenin."

Zweig was a traveller. He had travelled in Spain, Scotland, India, he had been in North America, Canada, Cuba.... But though he could describe strong characters like Magellan or Amerigo, he himself was a man of frail and morbid sensitivity. Any grief affected him, he never turned away from suffering as many often do for the sake of their own peace of mind. But his was not a wavering, indefinite humanism. Zweig could discern everything false in people. He could be fierce in his indignation and hatred when it was a matter of oppressing or restricting the rights of the individual. In such cases he was inexorable.

I had a correspondence with Zweig that extended over a number of years. Besides his letters he was fond of sending picture postcards of his native Salzburg, with its castle on a wooded hill, the spurs of the Alps in the distance, and the river Salzach running between them, a town where, perhaps in memory of Mozart, a great abundance of musical instruments is made. Every one of Zweig's letters is a reflection of his great soul: he always thinks of what matters, forgetting the personal. For Zweig the First World War was an unprecedented tragedy and it caused him great suffering. All the following years he lived with the premonition that a fresh tragedy was in the making. It was not an unreasoning feeling, but the kind of analysis of events that Zweig was well able to make by comparing historical facts and studying individual characters.

"The crisis throughout Europe has assumed terrifying proportions. Contemptible, foolish diplomats create greater and greater tension, preventing economic unification; they are frightened by Russia's incredible success, although they are beginning to understand that their power and privileges will soon come to an end. But it is just because they know this that they are using what time and power they have left; it is indeed one of the forms of mental blindness, or there is a deep metaphysical meaning in it. Always, when something in history is on the eve of its decline, the doomed lose their reason to such an extent that they not only fail to see their end, but even hasten its coming: the decade since the war in Europe will in this sense serve as a model for future historians," Zweig wrote in one of his letters to me.

After his visit to the Soviet Union in 1928, Zweig always intended to come again:

"What a pity we cannot set out together for the Pacific. If only you had waited a month or two! I am making plans with Masereel to do a six or eight week trip through Russia."

But he never managed to visit us a second time. Events brought Zweig back from his distant journeys into history to the cruel present that was about to crush Europe.

"It is not a very cosy world that we have here, a heavy cloud of political foolishness still hangs over our time. I sometimes think it quite comic, the childish problems that occupy our diplomats, while the general unification of Europe would be the only means.... I am now working on new things, and at odd moments, for my own amusement, have written a little light opera for Richard Strauss, just to get my fingers working for the big and serious task I have set myself."

Zweig never imagined the unification of Europe without the Land of Soviets; it was Soviet Russia that was for him the main factor of peace in the years when Hitler's tanks were already preparing for the invasion of his native Austria.

In 1935 Zweig's books were burned in Nazi Germany. Then the Nazis marched into Vienna and Salzburg and destroyed Austria's independence. Written from London, where he managed to take refuge, Zweig's letters are full of bitterness. But even in exile he never ceased to think of the great land of hope and achievement—the Soviet Union.

"You won't believe how happy I was to learn from all my friends' that life in Russia is improving, and that the difficulties and hard times, let us hope, have gone forever. I have just been discussing with my friend Masereel the possibility of our making a trip to Russia together next year. I really wish it very much. True, I must also visit South and North America this year. What a wanderer's life it is! I left my big house in Salzburg because the pressure from Germany is becoming too tangible.... You can imagine what sort of life charged with tension it is for us, writers, who in Germany have suddenly had their readers, their position and their honour taken away from them. You will find it expressed in *Erasmus* which I am sending you today, and in another book I am working on. *Mary Stuart* was really only an attempt to portray psychological contradictions; in spite of the fantastic success *Mary Stuart* and *Marie Antoinette* have had all over the world, these books do not satisfy me inwardly; the books I shall write in the near future will again be *novellas*. It needed some time to regain my spiritual balance. Work on history was only an escape from the present."

In another letter, two months later, the last I received from him, Zweig repeated:

"Many of my friends have been to Russia in the meantime and I have been happy to hear that conditions of life there have strikingly improved. Let us hope that everything that on both sides has been built with great labour will not be destroyed by war."

But war came. The little house Zweig had taken in Hallam Street, London, was not his refuge for long. His wandering bark now set sail for Latin America. Spiritually broken, disillusioned, crushed by the tragedy of being driven from his own country, Zweig settled in Brazil. Author of many deeply felt biographies, he finished the last lines of the biography of a man whom retreat into history did not save; this time it was the biography of Stefan Zweig himself. The best books he conceived remained unwritten. The novel he was working on was never finished. The return from history to the present day did not take place. Three months after his sixtieth birthday, in Petropolis, Brazil, he and his wife simultaneously committed suicide.

His last letter was full of bitterness. But it is also full of faith in that wonderful dawn that should rise over the world when the forces of darkness were overthrown and when those first shoots, to the praise of which Zweig had devoted the best pages of his books, should spring into growth.

I often think that Zweig should have fought the weakness in himself and waited for the dawn that is spreading ever further across the earth. Now, of course, he would be heart and soul with those who are fighting for peace and hate war. How sad that Zweig, the indefatigable traveller, never made that last journey.

On the roof of Zweig's big house in Salzburg there is a glass tower; from it one can see the blue spurs of the Alps and the silver ribbon of the river. A grape-vine rambles between the windows and roses bloom in the garden. The time will come when on that house, or on the spot where it once stood, a memorial plate will be fixed. The name of the writer who wrote so feelingly and discerningly about people will be engraved on that plate, and below his date of birth there might be an inscription to explain the true cause of his death: "Murdered by fascists, 1942."

FRIEDRICH WOLF

By profession Friedrich Wolf was a doctor. He had the gift of being extremely positive in his judgements, even in the difficult years of the war when many lost their spiritual balance, particularly if they had to live temporarily in exile.

There was always a great fund of collectedness in this silent, self-disciplined man. I never saw Wolf idle or despondent in those years. He used to write pamphlets, film scripts, fierce articles exposing the vile nature of nazism. In blacked-out, wartime Moscow he would bring his articles to the editorial office of *Izvestia* and wait until there, on the spot—in those days everything was done promptly—a translation of his article was dictated to a typist.

His pen was sharp, his style crisp, and it was always pleasant to translate Wolf. When I gave him the typed translation, he would become engrossed in reading; he was painstakingly learning Russian and was glad that he could already say a few words in Russian; any phrases that he found heavy he would immediately attempt to simplify. He was very concerned that his articles should be accessible to the general reader.

Wolf's inner collectedness was always likeable; he was a man of few words, but true to the core. During the war, besides his tireless work as a journalist, Wolf not only wrote his book *The Russian Sheepskin Coat*, he also wrote plays. He found time to write his books, yet did not let a single day pass without making his voice heard in a pamphlet, in a newspaper article or a radio broadcast to the underground. He expressed this constant occupation with work even in the inscription on one of the books he gave me: "While working. Moscow. 23. II. 1942."

Wolf's name was hated by the nazis. His plays *Sailors of Cattaro* and *Potassium Cyanide* which had been performed on many stages in Germany, were destroyed; Wolf showed me the only surviving printed copies. But that energetic man with the thin face and lively clever eyes was never bowed for a moment. Only once, at the office, over a glass of tea, he expressed the thought that not every coil could stand up to such a powerful current; in his language this meant that not every organism was capable of enduring such nervous strain. But he himself stood up to an enormous strain when he thought of the tragic fate of Germany in the grip of fascism.

"I think most of all about the fate of post-war Germany," he told me once. "Fascism will be defeated, I am convinced of that, but how much work will yet have to be done against internal fascism! I am a doctor and I know very well what it means when a disease goes below the surface. The main struggle for us, of course, is still ahead. We shall have to educate the growing generation all over again. Fascism is not an epidemic, it is a disease that has been accumulating for dozens of years. It was spread by Prussianism and the Junkers, the two great banes of public life in Germany for a whole century. We are faced with an immense task of restoring health," he said, switching at once to the language of medicine to describe the truly colossal tasks that he and others were to perform.

In all Wolf's plays there is burning political conviction. *Professor Mamlock* is an angry protest against racism, *Floridsdorf* is dedicated to the Austrian workers' class struggle in February 1934, *Sailors of Cattaro* deals with the revolutionary uprising of Austrian sailors in February 1918, the historical play *Poor Konrad* is about the peasant revolt of 1514. Wolf was stirred by great historical events, and all his writings for the theatre could justly be described as heroic tragedy; the wind of history always blew through his books and plays.

He was glad that he had learned not only to speak Russian, but even to write a little, and he seized every opportunity of leaving me a note in Russian, even if it had mistakes in it; I have kept several of those notes from Wolf, which touchingly resemble school exercises. He studied Russian not only because he loved the Russian people and their literature, but because he thought of the great connection that was to grow between the German people and the country that had brought about their liberation; in those days that meant looking into the future, but the future was not so far away.

Friedrich Wolf did what he set out to do in the hard winter of 1942—he went on fighting when the war in its external form was already over. The new, democratic Germany was being built. The new generation of young Germans, who were to know the tragedy of their fathers, and who had to be taught to hate fascism, was growing up. Friedrich Wolf had to be at the front line, and we soon heard his voice calling to struggle for the great national cause of his people. That struggle, as we know, is not yet over, and it is fair to say that Friedrich Wolf fell in battle.

On October 5, 1953, the G.D.R. press reported that the famous German poet and writer Friedrich Wolf was dead; he was given a national funeral.

"Death, lads, don't you understand... death is our best drummer-boy!" those concluding lines of one of Wolf's plays, which echo Heine's words that it is the drummer's job to wake sleepers from their slumber, could be a fitting epitaph for their author: Friedrich Wolf's life and his death were both a call to action.

The time will come when Friedrich Wolf's life will itself become the theme of an historical play about a national hero at one of the most critical periods of Germany's history, and that play will waken the conscience of the people, as did all Wolf's life and work.

MARTIN ANDERSEN NEXÖ

In Nexö's appearance there was something of those great Scandinavians, as we imagine them from childhood. He was like Ibsen and Bjornstjerne Bjornson. His huge forehead was literally framed in a halo of grey hair and there could hardly have been a single person who, looking at Nexö, did not suppose him to be a thinker or a writer.

Nexö's inner being was in surprising harmony with his exterior. For dozens of years he was the bell-ringer of social truth in Danish literature. The Norwegian writer Nordahl Grieg once said to me:

"We, Norwegians, have some good writers, but we have no writer-tribune. In this respect Danish literature has been luckier."

He was thinking of Martin Andersen Nexö.

Nexö visited the Soviet Union more than once; he came with his wife, he came with his children. I once saw him when he had just arrived. His face was radiant, he was ready to pick up every child in his arms, welcoming everything new, young, ascendant that had always captivated him in our country. Yet he had a scathing tongue for all the outlived, small-owner, philistine side of life of which he was so conscious in the bourgeois part of Danish society. And at the same time everything connected with his own people, with their fate in the world, was not only dear to him, it was the foundation of his life. He was a people's writer in the very highest sense of the term, and the democratic section of Danish society looked upon him as the man who expressed their cherished strivings.

One evening, at a supper held in Nexö's honour by one of our writers, Nexö, mellowed by the homely atmosphere and the friendship of the people round him, said: "I feel myself as much at home with you as in my native Denmark. I can never forget how the bourgeois press has baited me all these years... how it tried to break my spirit. But I always had the people on my side and that made every ordeal easier for me. In our country a writer always feels the support of the people if he is close to them in his books."

Many people greeted Nexö on his seventieth birthday. My message of greeting was also printed in a Danish newspaper. Some time later I received an air-mail letter from Nexö, who wrote from Copenhagen. That letter expresses the essence of Nexö to such a degree that I want to quote it in full:

"It's a pretty long time since you sent me your good comradely greeting, and only now have I got down to sending you thanks and greetings in reply. It's always like that when you are getting old and there are still a lot of things around to be done. . . . You, of course, have a tremendous lot to do, and you get it done. We have enough work on hand also, but it doesn't get done. We are living in a frontier zone in time, as well as in territory, and that's not very comfortable. People living in a frontier zone are like people sitting between two chairs. . . . A month ago I sent the second volume of *Morten the Red* entitled *The Lost Generation* to Moscow and I am interested to know how my Russian friends liked the book. Now I am going on gently with the third volume.

"It's gloomy, grey and uninviting here. The winter weather is oppressive, and the political atmosphere is even more so. But the New Year is coming and it will bring, we hope, something new in the spiritual sense."

That letter was written by a man of seventy-five who had lived a life of tireless creative labour, and in every line one can feel how oppressed he was by the poisoned air of the political life in his own country, and how the great radiance of life in the Soviet Union held his gaze. In Denmark it was gloomy and uncomfortable, but he worked, he wrote his books, the ordinary people of Denmark loved him, he was their great son.

I look upon my meetings with Nexö as a gift of fate: I had had the chance of knowing intimately a man who from the close of the nineties, through the whole first half of the 20th century tirelessly steered his ship amid the reefs of the bourgeois life by which he was oppressed and which he hated, amid thousands of sand-banks and submerged rocks, and who had not only steered towards the beacon lights, but had himself lit his own lights. It is those lights that Danish literature will follow, for they are lights of challenge and courage. And it can truly be said that Nexö did his full shift of labour; he created an epic out of his own life, and for many decades was a perfect example of tireless and loyal service to the people.

I met Nexö for the last time at the Pushkin celebrations in Moscow. He stood by the statue of Pushkin with hat in hand, attracting everyone's attention by his appearance. I went up to him just when he had been invited on to the platform.

"When you stand below you feel yourself nearer to the people," he said to me, quite sure that no one would take his refusal as an attempt to show off. No, he was incapable of showing off; and he not only wanted to be close to the people, it was the foundation of his life. "By the way," he added, "a platform doesn't always mean height for a writer. . . . the firmer the writer stands on the ground, the higher he is."

Nexö had his feet firmly on the ground, and he was well able to distinguish what helped life flower, and what hampered it. It was the main theme of his books, dedicated, as they were, to the ordinary folk of his native Denmark.

Rehōrtage

Olga AFANASYEVA and
Alexander VASILYEV

Behind the Curtain

Dusk is falling in Moscow. Near the doors of a modest greyish-green building six big rectangular lamps burst into light. There is a crowd of people on the pavement. Those who were not wise enough to buy their tickets in advance are rushing about asking new arrivals whether they have any to spare. Taxicabs line up and deposit their passengers. Late-comers dash up.

The curtain rises in the Moscow Art Theatre.

But the theatre is interesting not only when you look at the stage from the auditorium. There is just as much to interest us if we peep behind the curtain and thread our way through the maze of corridors back stage or enter the theatre's holy of holies, the rehearsal rooms where the producer and the actors translate the author's conception, where characters are moulded, which are destined to win the heart of the public.

Let us take a look at what the Art Theatre is doing today; let us visit its auditorium, the foyers and the rehearsal rooms during the hours when the public is not usually admitted, the hours when those who are not in the know think the theatre is sound asleep.

The stage is a busy place from early morning. At eight the stage-hands and electricians turn up, followed by the wardrobe mistresses and the make-up artists. Today there is to be a run through of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*.

If you—one of the uninitiated—look from the dress-circle over the empty stalls at the stage when preparations for a rehearsal are only just under way, everything will seem strange to you. You may even find something quite mysterious about the chaotic disorder. Only the very down-to-earth dialogue between the stage-hands brings us back to real life and tells us that people are going about their ordinary routine jobs.

An interesting fact. All the stage-hands are very well informed about the *mise en scène*; they know the play they are working on. That is a tradition that dates back to Stanislavsky's days. He believed that in the difficult art of the theatre there ought to be no single participant in a production who worked mechanically, without understanding the aims and tasks of the spectacle as a whole.

And so the stage-hands are occupied not only with the scenery or with some properties or other, they are not merely familiar with the general plan of the production, they are often subtle judges of an actor's performance. Leading actors of the Art Theatre company listen most willingly to the advice of veterans who have taken part in dozens of productions and passed through the school of Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko.

By the efforts of these people who though unnoticed by the audience play so necessary a part in the production, the stage is transformed under our eyes. Out of the original chaotic disorder of the clumsy scenery a room

in the palace of Leontes, King of Sicilia, with its high arches decorated with griffons, takes shape. A dais with three antique chairs on it: these are intended for the main characters—Leontes, his queen, Hermione, and their guest Polixenes, King of Bohemia.

The electrician tries out the lights and in the deep background, beyond the arches, the yellowish southern sky appears.

Hours pass. Then the artistic workshops come to life. The tailors bustle about fitting costumes. In the dressing-rooms make-up artists sort out their paints and lacquers, their wigs and beards.

Eleven o'clock. The dressing, the wigging, the making-up of the players are in full swing. Under our eyes the young actress Lyubov Pushkaryova turns into Hermione. Shed are the cares and joys of an ordinary Moscow day. The actress lives her part. Though not yet on stage her face betrays the fact that the tragic fate of Hermione has taken possession of her. Soon Hermione's fate will move an audience. Let us not bother her.

Downstairs couriers and soldiers of the Royal Guard press and white-robed priests pass swiftly by. In separate dressing-rooms two of the principals are completing their make-up: People's Artiste of the R.S.F.S.R. Mikhail Bolduman who is playing the grim-faced Leontes, and the young actor Galiks Kolchitsky, who acts the part of the sprightly Polixenes.

There is still half-an-hour before the rehearsal starts so let us peep into the dressing-room which Stanislavsky always used.

This room is preserved as a little museum. The table with a small cheval-glass, a sofa for resting on, a few costumes worn by the actor in plays by Chekhov and Ibsen. On the walls hang an autographed picture of Chekhov, a large portrait of Lilina, Stanislavsky's wife and fellow-founder of the Art

Theatre, photographs of Stanislavsky himself in various roles, and those of his friends as well as portraits of leading figures of Russian art.

Everywhere there reigns an atmosphere of quiet. Stanislavsky insisted on exemplary discipline. If for him the theatre was a temple then the wings were its altar. Stage-hands move noiselessly in soft felt slippers. Loud talk is forbidden. Those actors who are not waiting to go on must not throng the wings. There is a spacious foyer for them to rest in on each floor.

We are in the foyer of the male actors' floor. Here the actors, already in costumes and make-up, are talking to each other in low voices. Others are reading the wall-newspaper—the *Gorkovets*, ("Gorky's Follower"—the Moscow Art Theatre is dedicated to Maxim Gorky), where the latest items of theatrical news are to be found.

* * *

The birth of a new production at the Art Theatre is a process of stubborn and often long rehearsing.

Here is an example. We were working on Leonid Leonov's *The Golden Carriage*. The author attended one of the last rehearsals. Playwright and producer sat in the half-lit empty auditorium at the producer's table, their heads bent over a sheet of paper making notes as the play developed. When the actors had left the stage, the producer, stage-designer, stage manager, editor and conductor and all others who had a hand in the final presentation of the play gathered in the theatre manager's office. Leonid Leonov began to analyse in detail the performance he had just seen.

"The sunset in the first act is too pink and summery," Leonov comments. "My play calls for an autumn sunset—just a narrow yellow band of light amidst the

lowering rainclouds. That's all. And let us hear the plaintive cries of rooks when the curtain rises. You must create an atmosphere of a gusty autumn evening descending on a ruined war-time town"

The author analyses carefully each actor's entrance, his costume, manners and habits of speech. As he warms to his subject it seems that the characters are speaking rather than the man who has created them.

However, the company does not agree with everything the author says: they try to understand the play better but they are staging it their own way, taking into account the deep objective idea of the work which may be perceived from outside even better than by the author himself.

When everything has been carefully analyzed and considered, the dress rehearsals begin. Opinions are expressed on them by the artistic council of the theatre, and only then does the management fix a definite date for the first night.

To Leonov's *The Golden Carriage*, a very complex play which deals with the paths of development of Soviet society in the immediate post-war period, the Art Theatre devoted about two years' hard work.

It was a different story when it put into rehearsal another play about Soviet life—*Dmitri Stoyanov* by Bella Levantovskaya, a work dealing with youth, with the formation of the characters of young people and the contradictions of their growth. Everyone taking part in the production—producer, stage designer, actors—is quite young himself. And with the ardour and temperament of youth they resolved to have the play ready in two or three months. Everything started with a swing. Some two months after rehearsals had begun the young people put on a run-through in the rehearsal room. The management did not accept the work: there was too great a contrariety between the text of the play and the manner of

execution. The girl playing the leading role over-dramatized her heroine to such an extent as to deprive her of all youthful fervour, ingenuousness and girlish charm.

A conference was held between the theatre management and the cast. The erroneous tendencies in the production were thoroughly thrashed out and with the active assistance of the actors themselves the outline of each character was modified. From then on the work of the young producer was marked by greater thoroughness.

Another group of actors is rehearsing *Road Through Sokolniki*, written by a young dramatist Vitali Razdolsky and also dealing with the life of the younger generation.

The Art Theatre considers that if the company is to develop and do fruitful work it must, above all, be in close touch with life and the world it lives in; it must work on the creation of contemporary characters by studying attentively the everyday life.

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The auditorium is bathed in gloom. Only a few dim lamps glow. Rows of oak seats. In the eighth row of the stalls there is a seat with a small metal plate on it: "K. S. Stanislavsky's seat." From that seat the great reformer of the theatre watched rehearsals and performances. Across the aisle there is another seat marked "V. I. Nemirovich-Danchenko's seat."

There they would sit together yet typically separated by an aisle, each going his own way even when they worked side by side. The co-operation of these two uncommonly gifted people founded the Art Theatre and laid down the lines for its best work.

Anton Chekhov was also a frequent visitor to this theatre. From that side box over there he watched the first performance

of *The Cherry Orchard* on January 31, 1904. That was the last time he visited his beloved theatre. A few months after that performance he was struck low by a serious illness. But since then Chekhov's plays have never left the repertoire of the Moscow Art Theatre and are presented regularly in many other theatres all over the world.

The Art Theatre is now presenting *The Three Sisters*, which was first produced by Nemirovich-Danchenko in 1940, and *Uncle Vanya*, produced by People's Artistes Mikhail Kedrov and Mikhail Yanshin several years ago. Towards 1960 when the centenary of Chekhov's birth falls, the theatre intends to have all five of Chekhov's best plays in its repertoire.

At present, in preparation for its London season, the Moscow Art Theatre is reviving *The Cherry Orchard*. This is no easy task. *The Cherry Orchard* was first produced in the beginning of 1904, under the personal supervision of the author. For more than 40 years, thanks to the consummate skill of the older generation of actors, the production ran without a change. Their successors cannot, naturally, simply ignore the interpretation created by such great actors. But then they have no desire to imitate them.

In other words, each new actor will play his part in a new way. There has, moreover, been a change since 1904 in the very approach to this swan song of Chekhov's. For instance, there can be no doubt that the entire sympathy of Soviet audiences will be for Anya who sets out so bravely to face a new life. So it is not surprising that the motto: "Greetings to you, the new life!" has become the leit-motif of the present production. Ranevskaya and Gavayev were not able to keep the cherry orchard —the poetic symbol of the passing or, rather, of the irrevocably lost life of the landed gentry. Lopakhin, a man of affairs with a practical, bourgeois frame of mind, cuts down the cherry orchard without much hesitation. In the

place of the cut-down orchard the new generation finds a garden still more beautiful and poetically sublime. That is the idea the theatre wishes to bring out in this play which to us somehow embraces three historic stages in Russian life.

Olga Knipper-Chekhova who witnessed Chekhov's creative quest and who for decades was the only actress playing the role of Ranevskaya at the Art Theatre, is taking an interest in the theatre's work on the new production of *The Cherry Orchard*. She gladly shares her ideas with others.

"Anton Pavlovich," she says, "created a living, tender, spontaneous character. Ranevskaya lives real, impetuous moments. She easily forgets the past and does not have a thought for the morrow. Fecklessness, a childish trait, seems to me to be her distinguishing characteristic, and yet the whole character is profoundly dramatic. Firm ground slips from under Ranevskaya's feet. The familiar way of life is falling to pieces. That is the cause of her nervousness, her fecklessness and weakness."

The actress went on to say that she had never been satisfied with her own performance and that she had always been in search of something new, finding it and yet going on seeking more.

"You can work without end on Chekhov," she concluded. "And the new generation will find its own view of the play and of each character in it."

The theatre is putting a lot of work into *The Three Sisters* too. This play, as you probably know, was written by Chekhov specially for the Art Theatre. First produced in 1901 it occupied a prominent place in the repertoire for over 25 years. In 1940 Nemirovich-Danchenko staged a new production of *The Three Sisters*, and that version of the play has been carefully preserved till now. But the players who took part in that production 18 years ago have had

to make way for a younger generation. The producers are now faced with the task of using a new combination of individuals to achieve that well-shaped, delicate and genuine harmony for which the company has been renowned for so many years.

* * *

The new generation of actors lives and works side-by-side with the older masters of stagecraft at the Moscow Art Theatre, and benefits from their knowledge and experience.

At nine o'clock each morning, when the main stage is being used for rehearsals, studies begin at the theatre's studio school in a neighbouring building.

Founded in 1943 on the initiative of Nemirovich-Danchenko the school prepares future actors and actresses. Come and take a look at the acting class. It will probably be the most interesting.

We pass through a high white door into an ordinary-looking room. Near the wall on the left the teacher sits; the chairs arranged diagonally near the window are for the students. On the right stands a canvas screen.

This is the class of People's Artiste of the R.S.F.S.R. Pavel Massalsky. Three students—two boys, and a girl with a touching, almost childish expression—are listening attentively to every word of their teacher.

The students have been told to act a dramatic version of Chekhov's well-known humorous tale *The Night Before Trial*. Three people meet one night at a staging post on the highway. One of them, a young man, is to appear in court the next day on a charge of forging his grandmother's will, bigamy and the attempted murder of a billiard marker. His companions are a middle-aged man with a young wife who are passing

the night at the station behind a screen. Out of sheer boredom and a habit for flirting the young man starts paying attention to the young woman and when she complains of feeling unwell, makes himself out to be a doctor. He even takes a fee from the husband. Next morning in court it appears that the husband of the "patient" is the state prosecutor whose duty it is to present the case to the court.

The actor performing the part of the young man has a difficult task. To play the part properly and portray the feelings of the character correctly, the actor must put himself into the position of the young man. He has to imagine his way of life, his home, his habits; he must picture the restaurant where he got drunk the night before, in a word, he must begin to live the life of that man. That, in fact, is what Massalsky demanded of his students.

"It's impossible to live the life of one's character for long," he explains. "You can't do it even for a day, and for beginners like you it's hard to do it for as little as an hour or two. But you can manage five minutes. And it's with those five minutes that you've got to begin. Only when an actor grasps his character with his heart, not merely with his mind, can he play the part correctly."

"To begin with you must understand the character's inner life and imagine his actions. Then you must live in his atmosphere, his surroundings. I already know that man. I know where he lives, and the restaurant where he tried to kill the billiard marker. The next stage is to place oneself in those circumstances which defined the character's actions, and then his psychology will be understandable. It's not a matter of outward imitation; you have to live the life of another person."

Observing that his student was not seeing, or, rather, "feeling" his character clearly,

Massalsky sat down beside him and asked him confidentially:

"Do you play billiards, Roma?"

The student cheered up and answered affirmatively.

"Well then, imagine that you and I are playing pool. We play for an hour, for a second hour—you're still winning—you make your last stroke—and suddenly some marker jolts your elbow and everything's ruined . . ."

Massalsky is no longer telling the tale, he is acting. Before the student's eyes the scene stands out so clearly that he cannot restrain himself and cries:

"Oh, the scoundrel!"

"Aha!" says Massalsky with pleasure. "You—a Soviet student—got furious with the creature. But now imagine how Chekhov's hero would feel—you see, he must have been playing for money; he'd have lost a fair sum; what's more, his morale was very low. Those are the circumstances which could bring your hero first to commit murder and secondly to deny his guilt."

"The main thing is to believe in the character you are acting," says Massalsky. "Then the audience will believe in him too."

It is difficult to fathom how many interesting things an experienced teacher, himself a talented actor, can pass on in one short hour to his pupils. The entire lesson is a sort of improvisation and yet you feel that the teacher has thought over every word, every gesture and intonation.

Men and women whose style of acting is suitable for the Art Theatre are often invited to join the company from other theatres and gifted artistes from the provinces not unfrequently find their way to the stage of the Art Theatre.

There is an interesting story attached to the way Anna Andreyeva came to perform the part of Anna Karenina. For a num-

ber of years this young actress worked in provincial theatres and was far from well-known. She came to Moscow and decided to apply for work at the Art Theatre, a step which at first sight might seem bold if not impertinent, for she requested that she be given a trial in the main role of one of the theatre's best productions—*Anna Karenina*.

After several rehearsals with other actors Anna Andreyeva was given an audition by the artistic council of the theatre—on that occasion in the foyer. The Art Theatre "elders" were struck by the deep sincerity, fine inner temperament and easy excitability of the actress. It was decided to continue rehearsals. Soon the date of her *début* was fixed and this hitherto unknown actress made her first appearance before the public in one of the most difficult of roles. Her success surpassed all expectations. Anna Andreyeva was taken on by the Art Theatre and at once attained a leading position in the company.

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The Art Theatre has connections with many theatres all over the world. Here is an interesting fact. The theatre is reviving a dramatization of Dostoyevsky's monumental novel *The Brothers Karamazov*. Rehearsals have begun. This work had evoked considerable interest in the West. Theatre-workers in various countries have made inquiries about the new dramatization of *The Brothers Karamazov* with the intention of staging it themselves. The Art Theatre is readily replying to these inquiries.

In general, the Moscow Art Theatre receives requests for consultations and assistance on creative questions from the most varied quarters. In the museum of the theatre we have been shown letters from Germany, Yugoslavia, Japan, India, Great Britain,

the United States of America, Italy, Rumania, Hungary and other countries. Some ask for copies of plays in the theatre's repertoire to be sent them, others want copies of theatre posters for museums, photographs of productions, biographical data about Soviet playwrights and actors, information about methods of using back-cloths (the theatre has an experimental production workshop). Requests are of the most diverse nature but the theatre is happy to reply to letters from distant friends and tries to deal

with their questions as thoroughly as possible.

The Art Theatre today stands for fidelity to traditions and a constant search for the new, for the craftsmanship of the artists of the older generation and the bold beginnings of youth. And these are all combined in a devotion to the realistic method in scenic art, to an invariable striving for living truth revealed and embodied by the methods of what Stanislavsky called the "art of emotional experience."



That Pushkin's last letter was about the English poet Barry Cornwall?

Pushkin had shown a lively interest in Cornwall's work and intended acquainting the readers of his magazine Sovremennik (*Contemporary*) with him. On January 27, 1837, two hours before the fatal duel with Dantès, he sent a volume of Cornwall to the translator Alexandra Ishimova. In the accompanying note he wrote: "You will find some plays marked in pencil at the end of the book. Translate them the best you can. I assure you, you will do an excellent translation . . ." Those were the last words the great poet ever wrote.

That Emil Zola's novels "La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret," "Au Bonheur des Dames" and "Son Excellence Eugène Rougon" were published in Russia before they were in France?

"In terrible hours of financial difficulty and despair Russia restored to me my faith and strength, providing me with a rostrum and a most learned and impassioned audience. . . . I cannot speak of this without emotion and will always remain grateful," Zola wrote, recalling the years he contributed to the St. Petersburg magazine Vestnik Evropy (*European News*).

Zola's connection with Vestnik Evropy (not only as a novelist but as the magazine's Paris correspondent) began in 1875, through the agency of Ivan Turgenev. The magazine published over 60 Paris Letters by the French novelist, dealing with literary, art and public events. These letters were very popular among Russian readers and were subsequently published in a separate volume both in Russia and in France.

PEOPLE AND EVENTS

Innokenti POPOV

Shostakovich's Eleventh Symphony

There are some works of art in which the creative genius of man is expressed with such power that our hearts and minds respond to it at once. Dmitri Shostakovich's new symphony, the Eleventh, is one of these. After only two or three performances it is already clear that world music has been enriched by one more masterpiece that will go down in the history of 20th-century music.

The Eleventh Symphony is distinguished from all the preceding symphonies by the clarity and melodiousness of the idiom. In this symphony the composer speaks to the listener in simple, heartfelt language of such fundamental things as life and death, the struggle for freedom and happiness of the people.

Another novel feature of the Eleventh Symphony is that it has a clearly-defined programme. Like the choral cycle, it is dedicated to the First Russian Revolution, as is evident from the title, "1905."

The first movement, "Palace Square" serves as an introduction, a prelude to the stormy events to come. It is a sort of musical landscape, representing the vast de-

serted square in front of the tsar's palace in St. Petersburg and symbolizing as it were the callous indifference and deadly inertia that prevailed in the Romanov Empire.

Slowly, oppressively the music begins. Cold, heart-chilling chords, the vibrant tremolo of the strings restrained by the geometrical precision of the phrases. The frosty stillness is broken now and again by the ominous sound of muted trumpets. Against this bleak and desolate background appears the tender melody of the flute based on the old prisoners' song *Hark!* With it deep down in the basses is intertwined the melody of another popular folk song *The Captive* to the words of Herzen's friend, the Russian poet Nikolai Ogarev:

*Dark is the night. Now's the time!
But the prison walls are strong.
Two iron padlocks
Make fast its heavy gates.*

A picture of old tsarist Russia where life was unendurable for the common man and where every glimmer of free thought was ruthlessly stamped out rises before the listener.

The second movement ("January Ninth") describes one of the most tragic episodes in the history of the Russian people—the shooting down of peaceful people in the manifestation on the Palace Square on January 9, 1905. Goaded to desperation by inhuman conditions, crowds flocked to the Winter Palace to lay their troubles before the "Little Father" and to beg him to intercede on their behalf with his ministers. But a hail of rifle bullets met them as they reached the square. Hundreds of innocent people, men, women and children, were killed, thousands injured.

The composer tells the story with tremendous tragic feeling. The dynamic energy that had been held back throughout the

first movement bursts forth here with irresistible force. Gigantic waves of sound rise higher and higher. Shostakovich succeeds here in achieving an almost visual concreteness of every musical image combined with unceasing dramatic tension in the music. The listener sees before him the crowd of toil-worn people vainly seeking to confide their misery to the tsar (here the composer develops the extraordinarily expressive intonations of choruses as Mussorgsky did in his *Boris Godunov* and *Khovanshchina*). We see the regiments of guardsmen barring the people's way. And suddenly with a frightful crash of the drum the massacre of the unarmed people begins. This final wave of sound based on the polyphonic development of harsh, brutal themes rises higher and higher culminating in a mighty crescendo almost overpowering in force. And then once more the music returns us to the empty palace square; again we hear those heart-chilling chords, the fathomless basses, the gloomy muffled voice of the kettledrums, the ominous sound of the muted trumpets....

Beginning with the third movement, the composer weaves more and more Russian revolutionary song motifs into the fabric of the symphony. But now they no longer serve a purely programme function, they have become the very stuff of the music, the international medium out of which the musical images emerge. In this sense one is quite justified in comparing the Eleventh Symphony of Shostakovich to the *Eroica Symphony* of Beethoven or to the lofty eloquence of Berlioz, who elevated the hymn of the French revolution to the heights of symphonic grandeur, making it the foundation for musical canvases of great tragic impact.

The third movement, which the composer calls "Everlasting Memory," is based almost entirely on the melody of the funeral hymn *You Fell in Freedom's Battle* which

the Russian revolutionaries sang as they bade farewell to their comrades who had given their lives for the freedom and happiness of their people. The passionate inner strength, indomitable will and faith in the ultimate triumph of the noble ideals of mankind expressed in this hymn set it apart from all other popularly known funeral marches.

Developing these qualities of the melody, Shostakovich creates a symphonic requiem of extraordinary grandeur. There are many episodes in this third movement which can be called strokes of genius. Such for instance is the first statement of the hymn theme where the violas seem actually to speak, or the beginning of the second episode based on the melody from Shostakovich's choral poem *Bare Your Heads* where the French horns, trombones and trumpets achieve an amazing degree of expressiveness.

The finale of the symphony, "The Tocsin" depicts the beginning of the popular uprising. Again, as in the second movement, the music illustrates the stormy scenes of revolution. But the vast musical fresco that now unfolds before us is of a different nature. No longer do we hear intonations of hopeless grief and anguish. Iron-clad march rhythms permeate the musical pattern. There is an irresistible summons in the call of the trumpets and trombones. The kernel of musical development here is the melody of the Russian revolutionary songs *Let the Tyrants Rage*, and *The Warsaw March*, both spirited, forceful expression of lofty civic feeling.

The emotional tension increases with every moment rising in a vigorous, dramatic melody to a powerful unison of the strings. And suddenly everything breaks off. Briefly, before the triumphant, epic finale, the composer takes us back to the now transformed Palace Square as a reminder of the heroes who laid down their lives in unequal struggle

with the autocracy, in homage to the sacred memory of those who died for the sake of the happiness of future generations.

Shostakovich's Eleventh Symphony is the work of a great master. The logical development of the idea, the scrupulous attention to detail, the thoughtful selection of melodic, harmonic and orchestral media place the work among the classics of symphonic music. Moreover, and this is perhaps the most significant thing about the new work, the composer has completely mastered here the secret of establishing contact with the mass audience, he has learned to treat of highly complicated philosophical problems in clear, simple and extraordinarily moving language. Shostakovich's music has become melodious without forfeiting anything of its distinctive expressiveness. This is something that must be emphasized, for it is no secret that in recent decades few composers have succeeded in organically combining symphonic development of the musical conception with that melodiousness we

find in the masterpieces of, say, Beethoven or Chaikovsky or Brahms.

Shostakovich has mastered the art of assimilating and translating into the modern idiom the priceless treasures of musical expression discovered by the great masters. He does not treat the classics with the nihilistic disdain one observes in the work of some twentieth century composers. But neither does he imitate. The Eleventh Symphony bears the indelible stamp of his original genius; it carries on the classical tradition in the language of our time.

The Soviet public received Shostakovich's latest work with tremendous interest. The first performances—in Moscow by the State Symphony Orchestra under Natan Rakhlin and in Leningrad by the Leningrad Philharmonic conducted by Evgeni Mravinsky—were a genuine triumph.

One can safely predict that the Eleventh Symphony, this paean to the might of the human spirit, to man's struggle for freedom and happiness, will be equally well received by music lovers in all countries.



That Edison's phonograph has preserved Tolstoy's voice to our day?

Leo Tolstoy received a phonograph, then a technical novelty, from the American inventor as a gift on his eightieth birthday. He used the phonograph to reply to his numerous correspondents and also for some of his literary work. Among the records of Tolstoy's voice that have come down to us is a wax roll with fragments from his famous pamphlet I Cannot be Silent! Under the impression of numerous reports about sentences passed on participants of the Russian revolution of 1905 Tolstoy spoke his anger straight into the phonograph.

The Soviet Art Exhibition

In the very centre of Moscow, close to the Kremlin, stands one of the most beautiful of the capital's buildings. Erected in 1817, and designed along classical lines the "Manège" was originally used as a riding school, but was later taken over for other purposes. However, despite the alterations made to its interior the Manège always remained a beautiful simple building, dominating one of Moscow's main squares.

Shortly before the 40th anniversary of the October Revolution this building was put at the disposal of Soviet artists as their central exhibition salon. On the eve of the anniversary a big exhibition was opened in the rebuilt premises of the Manège, as Moscovites still call it, with 2,500 paintings and sculptures. Of course, even such a big building could not accommodate all the works of art that were prepared for the anniversary exhibition, for there were over 8,000.

Artists from all the Soviet Republics, of all the generations and, what is more, artists working in different genres of pictorial and graphic art and sculpture, competed to have their works accepted for the anniversary exhibition. For this reason the graphic artists exhibited the 2,000 works in the spacious halls of the Academy of Arts while the scenery designers, the mural painters, applied and folk artists exhibited in other Moscow halls as well as clubs and palaces of culture.

Naturally, it is impossible to review all these exhibitions in one article. However, one cannot fail to note the artists' desire to depict every aspect of the life of their people and their country, and to widen the use of various means and technical materials. The U.S.S.R. Exhibition reflects the synthesis peculiar to socialist realism—the profound inner bonds

between different arts, the diversity of the artists' search for expression, and, what is also important, the fact that art is penetrating more and more into the social and personal life of the Soviet people.

Here I shall only speak of the central exhibition at the Manège, because this has proved especially popular. The canvases and sculptures to be seen here, with their impressive forms and the strongly felt background of real life seem to be the greatest attraction for the public. The Manège is always crowded with visitors. Long queues wait for admission and lively debates take place in front of many paintings and sculptures.

Never before have so many works been sent in to a nation-wide art exhibition from the national Soviet Republics as were entered for this exhibition in honour of the 40th anniversary of the Revolution. This is why its sponsors gave each Republic a special section.

Another equally important feature of the exhibition is the large number of works by young artists, by the generation born in the twenties and thirties.

Whichever Republic we choose to study, we find that beside the famous artists there are also young ones who have remained unknown to art lovers of the capital until now. Moreover, some of these young artists are exhibiting their first works. This "advance of youth" is greatly appreciated by everyone who is interested in the future of Soviet art, especially since the majority of the young artists show good professional training and a tendency to treat big social problems and themes that enable the artist to look into his country's past, find his bearings in the present and portray the finest people of his country. This is an excellent safeguard for the future of our art.

While the charm of the young painters lies in a new treatment of historical and contemporary topics and the romantic emotion

of their images, the best representatives of the older generation attract visitors by their maturity. Without needing to look at the catalogue the visitor immediately recognizes the style of Sergei Gerasimov, Alexander Deineka, Arkadi Plastov, Martiros Sarian. Each of these artists has long ago chosen the range of subjects most dear to him and has become part of a definite world of images which corresponds to his individual character.

Arkadi Plastov and Sergei Gerasimov are men who paint the land and the tillers of Central Russia. Deineka prefers the city dwellers of today, athletes or workers of big industrial centres. Sarian is the poet of Armenia and her lovely scenery while Boris Iohanson is a master of historical themes taking for his subject the revolutionary masses, the fighters for the cause of the working class.

Much space has been allotted to Plastov, a lyrical painter who exhibits portraits of collective-farm girls and two big compositions, one of which is called *When There Is Peace in the World*. Imagine a dense apple orchard and a young mother lying in the grass under the trees, touched by the light of a sunny day as she plays with her baby. This peaceful picture of motherhood is full of life, faith in the future and happiness.

Another canvas *The Farmers' August* is devoted to labour. Plastov sees autumn as the time of harvesting, when the results of the worries and joys of a man who has worked well are reviewed, and the work-day units are counted up. The picture shows the moment when the grain that he earned by his work in collective-farm fields is delivered to his yard.... It is extremely true to life



A girl from Verkhovina.
By Andrei Kotska

and colourful, expressing the real attitude of a man to his work, which indeed can be found in all the best works of Plastov, an artist distinguished for his love of life and poetic presentation of Soviet village life. The picture is delightful for the warm shade of the pinky-gold grain, which pours in a broad stream on to the homespun cloth spread on the ground, for the cold grey of the roof, the bluish grey tints in the pigeons' feathers and the snow-white and blue shades of the geese which walk importantly round the grain. Just like the painting I spoke of before, this one too clearly says: "When there is peace in the world."

Sergei Gerasimov is also a painter of the peasantry, but he likes to show us the village of the pre-Revolutionary years, or of the early years after the Revolution. He is particularly attracted to the strong-willed Russian peasants who fought beside the workers to win land and freedom in 1917.



Change of shifts. By Tair Salakhov

While with Plastov the narrative element is dominant, Sergei Gerasimov as a rule avoids this in his paintings. He excels in depicting characters and types. As a painter, he "moulds" his heroes with a strikingly plastic touch, with much relief and energy. At the exhibition Gerasimov shows a new canvas which holds the attention of viewers by the strength of the people shown, by the power of their characters. He calls it *For the Soviet Power*. The picture shows a Russian village as it rose to defend the Revolution: great bearded peasants and some quite young ones, who we may guess have returned from the fronts of the First World War. In their midst is a worker, and they are rallied round a red banner. But this is not a demonstration. It is the working people on a fighting march. The picture expresses the national character of the revolutionary struggle.

Alexander Deineka has remained true to his favourite theme—industry. He depicts a group of foundrymen in the glow of a furnace. Deineka paints with clear-cut outlines, accurate and at times even somewhat rigid drawing, a preference for fine variations of one colour, for expressive silhouettes. Expression is his element.

He finds great beauty in Soviet industry and the worker who creates it. He paints machines in the foundries and is carried away by the beauty of their shapes, their clear-cut lines. His people are courageous and sometimes stern, as their labour demands. Such are the heroes of his new painting, too.

The common feature to be found both in Deineka's work and in that of Mikhail Trufanov from Leningrad is their admiration for the industrial worker, the desire to create a typical image. The topic of Trufanov's

Blast Furnace Workers seems a typical Deineka subject, but Trufanov uses completely different means of expression, which enables him to show the splendour of his pastose painting, the beauty of a bold free stroke, and the gradual changes of light.

Some topics have been treated by artists of different nationalities and different generations with varying success. These topics are very dear to Soviet artists and they put a great deal of inspiration and work into them. I have in mind the paintings and sculptures devoted to Lenin, to the October Revolution, to the people who paved the way to freedom and Communism in the Soviet Union.

The best sculpture of Lenin is, I consider, the one by Veniamin Pinchuk of Leningrad. He calls it *Lenin on the Platform*. Pinchuk continues the tradition started in the twenties by the well-known sculptor Nikolai Andreyev who hated any manifestation of "official approach." Nikolai Andreyev was lucky in that Lenin posed for him, and the sketches he made from life served as the basis for a large series of sculptures, which are distinguished by great truthfulness. The sculptor has succeeded in showing Lenin in his greatness and his simplicity, a man with the iron will of a fighter and the wisdom of a statesman.

The Lenin sculpture done by Pinchuk is in treatment somewhat similar to Andreyev's portrait of the leader of the Revolution. Pinchuk's Lenin is reserved and simple, while expressing great spiritual strength.

Lenin is also the subject of many other works, including a painting by Boris Johansson, People's Artist of the U.S.S.R., the paintings by young artists from Leningrad, Kiev and other towns. The majority of canvases show Lenin surrounded by people in various episodes of the revolutionary struggle and peaceful socialist construction. However, many of the compositions are not sufficiently general and deep. We are

shown separate episodes from Lenin's life and only some of the aspects of his extremely vivid and rich personality and work.

I believe that among the best compositions, those that have a deeper content and which are psychologically more expressive, mention should be made of a canvas by Semyon Guetsky, a Ukrainian artist, called *Smolny 1917*. The theme of the canvas is as follows: on one of the difficult nights of 1917, Lenin walks down a corridor in Smolny and stops in front of a group of exhausted soldiers who had dozed off on the floor. The Revolution is not over, and these modest fighters still have many hard battles before them. Lenin looks at them like a father. The theme is not complicated: it is almost prosaic, but it hides a great subject—Lenin's kindness, his love for the people.

Especially popular is a canvas by the young Leningrad artist Yuri Tulin which depicts one of the tragic events of the Russian Revolutionary history—the shooting of workers at the Lena Goldfields in 1912. This picture reflects the influence of a great master of historical compositions involving many personages, Vasili Surikov (1848-1916), who had the gift of picturing in his epics the turning points and the conflicts of Russian history with great dramatic force and skill.

The Surikov tradition of painting historical subjects demands a profound understanding of the very essence of people's character and the psychology of the personages, a knowledge of the motive forces of history. At the same time they require great skill of composition, a beauty of colour which enables the artist to depict in a single artistic unity the entire wealth of characters and emotions.

Yuri Tulin's canvas is excellent because the artist is himself deeply moved and has, with great simplicity, without undue exaltation, managed to show the emotions of people who are stricken by grief, at the shooting of their dear ones by the tsar's henchmen.

Young people always take a rather romantic view of life and the history of their country, particularly its most heroic pages. This feeling has been well expressed in several of the exhibits of young artists, and it enchants the visitor. There is one canvas that has always attracted my attention, each time I have visited the Manège.

What is it that draws us to this canvas? And why does one immediately feel that its painter, the Ukrainian Alexander Atsmanchuk is young, evidently of the same age as the hero of the painting? You notice immediately that the heroic episodes of his country's history stir him profoundly, that he admires courage and, perhaps, dreams of accomplishing heroic deeds himself. The romantic landscape plays a prominent role in this painting: in the background against a dull sky glows a huge crimson moon. In the foreground there is the face of the hero expressing great emotional intensity. The painting is called: *The Order Is Given*. . . . These words come from a song about the patriotic duty of the young people who defend their Motherland. And this is precisely the emotion that is felt in Atsmanchuk's work.

Another Ukrainian artist, Victor Shatalin, took his title from the old partisan song: *Over the Hills and Plains*. This song with its deep national character, and its heroism inspired the young artist to paint this picture: a group of young fighters gallop over the long grass forward into the flames of revolutionary Russia of the twenties, forward to attack the enemy, to great deeds.

While Atsmanchuk's work is lyrical, with subtle psychology, Shatalin takes epic themes. His view ranges over the wide expanses of his native Ukraine, he prefers big forms, and bright, full, pure colour. His drawing is particularly good in the figures of soldiers and partisans of the twenties who wear a most strange assortment of clothes. This variety enables the young artist to use brilliant and striking

combinations of colour.

This period of history when the young Soviet Republic had to fight the foreign interventionists and defend the gains of the Revolution has inspired many artists who exhibit at the Manège.

Then we see a different period with different songs. . . . Again there are trenches, a small group of soldiers, and the earth scorched by enemy shells. One of the soldiers who we guess is a peasant thinking nostalgically of his land, of peaceful toil, looks at a few miraculously preserved grains of wheat which he holds in his hand. In his thoughts he is far away on his own fields, and perhaps they too, have been ruined by the fascists, like these of the front line. This canvas *The Scorched Earth* is the work of the young artist Boris Nemensky, who was himself at the front and who developed an ever-lasting hatred for war. The images and pictorial methods used in his new works are quite different from those of Plastov, but they too, show the fight against war, for peace, for peaceful labour.

In his earlier works Nemensky showed the romantic side of the people he painted, and they were usually young fighters. Now he himself has become older and tries to depict the tragic aspect of the war. His colour, formerly fine and tender, with an air of "spring lightness," has undergone a change: his new canvas is built around the restrained contrast of the ominous reflections of fire and the darkness of a deep trench.

It is natural that so many canvases should be devoted to historical themes and to the Revolution, for on the 40th anniversary of our Soviet state we all look back upon the heroic road our country has covered; we remember with gratitude the people who laid down their lives for their country and pay them tribute.

However, it would be absolutely wrong to believe that only such canvases are on



Over the hills and plains. By Victor Shatalin

show. Many illustrate contemporary themes, some lyrical works are of a more personal nature, depicting love, friendship and childhood; there are paintings of thoughtful moments and gentle landscapes.

A small but very moving picture of a girl at a piano charms us by her concentration as she reads the music. Her head with the provocative pigtails is gracefully outlined against a window. The young artist is successful for his profound observation and for the beauty of his pale colour harmonies. This is *Home-Work*, a diploma work by Pavel Pankov.

A great variety of subjects and genres is characteristic of the art of all the Republics—Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and also of those which have no tradition of painting, such as Kazakhstan which is represented at the Exhibition in a very interesting way.

The Armenian section shows us beside the canvases of Martiros Sarian, who has been

popular for so long, the works of painters and sculptors of all generations. They are the poets of their native land who, basing themselves on the artistic traditions of their country, express life of today in their own way. The Armenian section includes many landscapes and still-lifes.

Landscapes and still-lifes are Sarian's favourites. All the characteristic features of his perception and of his delightful palette are displayed with particular brilliance in these genres. Sarian's Armenian landscapes have an almost epic treatment. Further and further they carry the eye away to the horizon, to a mountain range or the double peak of Mount Ararat. With faultless taste Sarian combines big areas of bright, almost pure colour so that his paintings seem to have something in common with decorative panels. However, he always avoids sharpness of contour: air is the medium which diffuses the boundaries of his distant horizons.

Armenian art is also represented by portraits and by genre paintings as well as by compositions on historical themes. Here are some of them: *On the Banks of the Sevan* by Grigori Khandzhian, *Sevan Fishermen* by Tigran Simonian, *My Family* by Mkrtich Sardakian, *Portrait of the Actress Eramdzhan* by Eprem Savaian, *The Last Night of Komitas* by Sarkis Muradian, *Portrait of the Worker Manukian* by Shanta Ertavtsian.

The Azerbaijani sculptors and painters mainly belong to the generation born in the late twenties or early thirties. Their sunflooded canvases radiate the joy of life. I would like to mention, first of all, Mikhail Gusein-ogly Abdullayev and Agasaf ali Dzhafarov, both from Baku. The former is 36 years old and a Merited Artist of the Azerbaijani Republic, the latter is 20 years old. Both of them visited India and brought back a series of sketches. They also used their Indian impressions for finished paintings; Dzhafarov in his *Choosing a Bracelet*, Abdullayev in his *Back From Work*. Abdullayev's work is large and full of poetry. It shows a group of Indian peasants returning from work. The painting attracts us for the grandeur of the mountain landscape veiled by the violet haze of falling dusk and for the deeply human and lyrical perception of life. Abdullayev also shows paintings of contemporary Azerbaijan.

The Azerbaijan section shows a humane and poetical attitude to the working man, wherever he comes from. These canvases also show a love for bright colours. Abdullayev is subtle and more of a lyricist. Dzhafarov's colour harmonies are more daring. He has the making of a fine artist.

In turning to the many sculptures exhibited,

I feel it necessary to note certain new trends. The sculptors tend to go in for monumental works, conceived as parts of architectural ensembles, covering a large area such as a square, or a stadium; there is also an interest in realistic sculptures, in symbolic sculptures, in sculptures which are allegoric in meaning. This does not in the least mean that works of this type put portraits or genre works in the background. The portrait is represented even more profoundly and with greater persuasiveness than at previous Soviet Art Exhibitions. An example of this is Alexander Kibalnikov's *Mayakovskiy* or Nikolai Tomsky's *Stalingrad Worker*. And yet the new tendency is coming to the foreground and will probably continue to progress, alongside other trends.

The hero of the symbolic sculptures is the strong, courageous man, the creator, the man who conquers the cosmos, the man who has defeated war for the sake of peace.

Evgeni Vuchetich's work *Let Us Beat Our Swords Into Ploughshares* is also conceived as part of an architectural ensemble. The figure of a nude warrior breaking a sword to forge a ploughshare is full of emotion and expresses the great will of a strong man who yearns for peaceful work and the happiness of all the peoples.

The image created by Kibalnikov in his *To the Sun* is much more restrained. We see a worker whose raised hand holds the golden symbol of solar energy. As we look upon this figure we cannot help thinking of the magnificence of emancipated labour and the wonderful achievements of modern science which have paved man's road to the stars.



River Bay

By Valdis Kalnrose (Latvian S.S.R.)



The Portrait of Chi Mu-tung (China)

By Izzat Klychayev (Turkmenian S.S.R.)

OUR CONTRIBUTORS

Mikhail Stelmakh, for his biography see No. 2, 1958.

Yuri Nagibin was born in Moscow in 1920. His first story, *Double Error*, was printed in the magazine *Ogonyok* in 1940. He was in his last year of study at the Cinematography Institute when the war began, and he at once volunteered for the army. After recovering from a serious concussion, he became war correspondent for the army paper *Krasnaya Zvezda* and the trade-union paper *Trud*.

In 1943 and 1944 Nagibin published several collections of stories—*A Man from the Front*, *The Great Heart*, *Two Forces*, and *Guardsmen on the Dnieper*, all of them about the modest, often unknown heroes of whom there were so many.

Since the war Nagibin has written on many subjects—sports, children, village life, hunting.

His short novel *Happiness Hard-Won* was published in No 4, 1957 of our magazine.

The young writer Stanislav Meleshin, (born in 1928) comes of peasant stock. His childhood was spent in Belogorka, Penza district, a small town famous for its carvers in wood.

During Meleshin's term of army service he lived in the Far North, where he became familiar with the life and habits of the Mancies, a small people about whom he wrote his first book called *The Tasmanov Family*.

In 1955 he graduated from the Gorky Literary Institute and in 1956 became member of the Union of Soviet Writers. From the time of his entering the Institute he has written four books: *Three in the Taiga*, *Pache, Ruma!*, *Kinsfolk*, and *Lubava*.

Soviet Literature published his story *A Shot Rang Out* in No. 12, 1957.

Vladimir Dneprov, for his biography see No. 1, 1958.

Nikolai Zhegalov, born in 1918, graduated from the Smolensk Pedagogical Institute. Later he took a post-graduate course at the Gorky Institute of World Literature. At present he is busy as a research worker at the Maxim Gorky Archives.

To his pen belong many articles on Soviet literature published in magazines *Oktyabr*, *Literatura v shkole* (Literature in School) [and others; he has prepared for publication a number of Gorky's letters.

Ekaterina Starikova, literary scholar, was born in 1924 in Moscow and graduated from the philological department of Moscow University in 1947. She is the author of a number of critical articles on Soviet literature published in the *Literaturnaya Gazeta* and magazines *Novy Mir*, *Znamya*, *Teatr*, etc.

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